TWO

SERMONS,

PREACHED AT

NORWICH.

BY

SAMUEL PARR, A.M.

Published by Request.

NORWICH:

Printed and sold by W. CHASE;

Sold also by R. BALDWIN, Paternoster-Row; J. WHITE, and C. BATHURST, Fleet-Street; T. PAYNE, Mews Gate; and H. PAYNE, in Pall-Mall, London.

MDCCLXXX.

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TO

THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

JOHN THURLOW, Esq.

MAYOR of NORWICH.

REV. RICHARD TAPPS, A. M.

REV. JOHN GREENE, A. M.

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS,

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR MOST OBEDIENT

SERVANT,

SAMUEL PARR.

NORWICH,
May 24, 1780.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following ſermons are ſent to the preſs, preciſely in the ſame form, in which they were prepared for the Pulpit. Their unuſual length obliged the author to omit, in the delivery, ſome parts, which he thought the leaſt intereſting. He hopes, however, that, to ſerious and impartial readers, he need make no apology for directing the whole to be printed. Conſcious as he is of his own defects in the arts of reaſoning, and in the graces of ſtyle, he does not preſume to ſet up any claim to literary reputation from theſe Diſcourſes. They were written with a ſincere deſire of doing juſtice to the ſubjects, which the author had occaſion to treat in the preſence of two very reſpectable *Congregations; and they are now ſubmitted to the candour of the public, partly, in deference to the judgment of ſome learned Friends, and partly, for the ſake of the Charity-ſchools in this city, to the ſupport of which, ſuch profits as may ariſe from the ſale will be applied.*

SERMON, I.

Preached in NORWICH CATHEDRAL, *December* 25, 1779.

GALATIANS iv. 4.

WHEN THE FULNESS OF THE TIME WAS COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON.

IT may be ranked among the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of the preſent age, that the authority of preſcription is openly diſavowed, and that enquiry is carried on with a ſpirit of incredulity, which, in reſpect to the ſubjects upon which it has been ſometimes employed, may be called rigorous to exceſs. That Chriſtianity, by the ſingularity of its pretenſions, by the dignity of its profeſſed origin, and the importance of its end, ſhould, in ſuch an age, attract the notice of ſpeculative men, cannot, I think, *ſurpriſe* any judicious believer; and it ought not to *alarm* even the moſt pious, ſince the abilities diſplayed in the defence of the Goſpel, bear no diſhonourable proportion to the exertions of thoſe, by whom it has been ſecretly undermined, or wantonly aſſaulted.

When the Controverſy turns either upon facts which ſacred Hiſtory has recorded, or upon Doctrines which the Goſpel has delivered, it is ſeldom difficult to reach the true point of deciſion. But the words of my Text direct our thoughts towards a ſeries of very different Topics.——Such, I mean, as have been hitherto diſcuſſed by the aid of abſtract reaſonings, or by the conſideration of circumſtances, which, however minute, when ſeparately viewed, are, in their collective force, neither uninſtructive nor unintereſting. Of this kind are the late appearance of Chriſtianity—its partial propagation—its imperfect efficacy.

If

If the cavils, that have been ſtarted upon theſe points, had no other tendency, than to let looſe the illiberal exultations of the enemies to our Religion, it would be our duty to encounter them with the moſt accumulated ſtrength of evidence, and the moſt vigorous efforts of reaſoning. But when they become the occaſions of embarraſsment and extreme dejection to thoſe, who wiſh to ſupport a better cauſe; when they damp the ardour of piety, or unhinge the ſteadineſs of faith, they cannot be paſſed over without all the diſgraceful appearance, and all the fatal effects of tacit approbation; without danger to the innocence of other men, and without invidious ſuſpicions concerning our own ſincerity. In the preſent diſcourſe, therefore, I ſhall firſt endeavour to eſtabliſh the validity of thoſe principles, by which objections of the kind juſt mentioned to you may be proved unphiloſophical as well as irreligious; and ſecondly, by a more diſtinct examination of the objections themſelves, I ſhall hope to expoſe their real futility, and to counteract their malignant operation.

Whether our reſearches be employed upon the phyſical or the moral conſtitution of the world, the ſchemes of God are ever found progreſſive in their execution; and however they may ſometimes unfold themſelves to an accurate and humble obſerver of what *has been* done, they often claſh with the hypotheſes of men who affect to penetrate into the counſels of their Maker, and who preſume to dictate what it *becomes him* to do. Now the redemption of mankind, in its various proofs, and its various uſes, extends back to the firſt deſign of God in creating this ſyſtem, and ſtretches forward to the eternal intereſts of *many* beings who are ordained to act in it. We may preſume, therefore, that all the cauſes, whether ordinary or extraordinary, mediate or immediate, which might be requiſite to its completion, were arranged with the niceſt exactneſs in the general order of things.

But, in a ſcheme ſo wide and ſo complicated, it is by no means ſurpriſing that ſome parts ſhould *totally* eſcape our obſervation, or that others ſhould be *imperfectly* underſtood from their connection with facts either forgotten or undiſcovered, with many *paſt* events which influence the preſent, with more that are yet *to come*, and are *themſelves* relative to a long ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects, where the leaſt are eſſential to the greateſt, and the moſt remote affect the moſt near.

From this intricate and almoſt boundleſs chain that links together the works of God, it becomes impoſſible for us to catch more than a faint and ſcanty glimmering of his purpoſes. For as the moſt common and uncommon phenomena may alike be traced up to queſtions which we cannot ſolve, ſo the ſolution of them would probably open to us new proſpects, where our reaſoning would be again perplexed, and conjecture itſelf at a ſtand.

By

By thoſe who ſeriouſly recollect the limited ſtrength of human reaſon, the foregoing obſervations will not be haſtily controverted—they prove, doubtleſs, the *exiſtence* of the moſt important facts to be compatible with our ignorance of all their *real* cauſes, and all their *poſſible* conſequences. They point out to us the method in which God is pleaſed to act, where the nobleſt intereſts of his creatures are deeply concerned. They may teach us not only to acquieſce in the *reality* of that method, but even to infer the *propriety* of it, from the relation that ſubſiſts between our intellectual powers and our *moral* agency.

Whether the Deity manifeſt himſelf to us by his word or his works, the deſign is not to amuſe but to improve us: not to gratify our curioſity but to exerciſe our faith: not to communicate, with a wild and uſeleſs prodigality, the knowledge of times and ſeaſons, which is juſtly reſerved to him who *alone* can regulate them, but to put us into a ſtate of probationary diſcipline. That ſtate, too, invariably exiſts at the very moment in which the will of God is propoſed to us, be it attended by few or many proofs; be it conſonant to our preconceived notions, or repugnant to them; be it ultimately admitted, or rejected. Hence it is, that the Chriſtian Revelation ſeldom addreſſes us, but in a tone of authority. Without bewildering our minds in curious and profound ſpeculations concerning the modes of the divine government, and the abſtract fitneſſes of things, it plainly records facts, which we are at liberty to believe or diſbelieve, juſt as it inculcates precepts, which we may obey or violate. When the fulneſs of the time was come, God, ſays the Apoſtle conciſely and peremptorily, ſent forth his Son.

But, if Chriſtianity be attended with difficulties which baffle our reaſon, it is alſo ſupported by evidences, on the force of which that reaſon may decide. If it be the property of the former to impede our aſſent, it is equally the property of the latter, when *clear* and appoſite, to engage it. If our conviction be built upon diſpaſſionate and laborious enquiry into that which *can be known*, it ought not to be ſhaken by *imaginary and unknown poſſibilities*. Much leſs will it be ſtaggered by the arguments of thoſe, who would diſprove the truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, becauſe the circumſtances of it do not coincide with *their ideas*, either of the proofs that are neceſſary to authenticate, or of the occaſion that is *ſufficient* to produce, a divine interpoſition. For while there is *any* proof, we have no right to preſume that it is *impertinent*—if there be any occaſion, we ſee *too little* of the proportion between means and ends, to pronounce it *utterly inadequate*.

Many of the objections which are made againſt the *time* and the *manner* in which the Goſpel was revealed, are reſted upon thoſe arguments

guments a priori, which uſually require no other qualification in thoſe who employ them, than the habit of torturing invention, and of wreſting facts. But ſuch arguments are as deluſive in matters of Religion, as in Science. They are unſatisfactory to every enquirer who wiſhes to be guided by his judgment rather than tranſported by his imagination: they are impertinent and highly unbecoming, whether they be employed by the friend or the adverſary of Religion. The former, in conſequence of internal and of external proofs, may admit the excellence of Chriſtianity, in the reaſonableneſs of its precepts, the forcibleneſs of its ſanctions, and the miraculous circumſtances of its publication. The latter has an unqueſtionable right to examine any evidences, upon which a Revelation *profeſſedly* founds its pretenſions. But when either of them, from the ſtores of his own obſervation draws forth criteria, by which *all* Revelations, *howſoever* circumſtanced, and *whenſoever* made, *muſt be* tried, he treads, ſurely, upon treacherous ground. The Chriſtian injudiciouſly aſſumes *in all* caſes, what he may properly urge in the form of *an inference* from evidences actually exiſting in a *particular caſe*. The Infidel as injudiciouſly endeavours to deſtroy thoſe evidences by *general* aſſumptions, which are not ſupported by any *direct* proof in the cauſe where he decides, and which may be oppoſed by many *indirect* proofs drawn from the works of God.

Upon the topics of Religion, the opinions of Men take a colouring from their wiſhes, from their prepoſſeſſions, from ſettled habits of thought and action, and from peculiar caſts of temper. But from whatſoever ſource thoſe opinions are derived, and to whatſoever conſequences they may lead, the conduct of God, as we know from *experience*, is, in many reſpects, far *different* from what we ſhould in *theory* ſuppoſe it likely to be. While the world is under a moral government, we might ſuppoſe it *juſt*, becauſe we feel it *deſirable*, that, amidſt the devaſtations of the ſword and of the peſtilence, ſome diſtinction ſhould be made between the righteous and the wicked. Under a wiſe and kind Providence, we might expect that order of *time* would be coincident with the order of *dignity*, in the communication of temporal bleſſings.* We might hope that the arts, by which the evils of life are mitigated, or its comforts are heightened, would be cultivated more ſucceſsfully and more diligently, than thoſe, which flatter our vanity and contribute to our amuſement. It *would* perhaps be more *beneficial*, and therefore we conclude that it *ſhould* have been more *eaſy* for us to underſtand, and draw out into uſe all the productions of the earth, than to aſcertain the eſſential properties of matter, or ſpeculate upon the excentric motions of comets. But if the procedures of

* See Butler's Analogy;—Some of the arguments employed by that learned Prelate, naturally occurred to me in the courſe of theſe obſervations, and I readily adopted them, becauſe I knew them to be juſt and appoſite.

of God be not analogous to our notions of fitneſs, even in the ordinary courſe of things that *are ſeen*, there is a ſtill greater probability of error, in our conjectures upon thoſe extraordinary appointments, which more immediately reſpect the things that *are not ſeen*.

To reaſon, I mean the very limited and wayward reaſon of man, it has ſeemed expedient that God ſhould accompany the Revelation of his Will, with evidences ſo illuſtrious, that no careleſsneſs could overlook, ſo peremptory that no ſophiſtry could confound, ſo forcible that no perverſeneſs could reſiſt them; and thus too, in reſpect to the commands and prohibitions of the Goſpel, they might have been expected to work a reformation almoſt inſtantaneous; to have rouſed the ſupine; to have ſoftened the obdurate; to have extirpated every Vice, and cheriſhed every Virtue to its utmoſt maturity. In the career of hypotheſis, we might venture one ſtep farther, and contend, that Redemption would be neceſſary for no man, or be conferred indiſcriminately upon all men, who are capable of being redeemed. *But God's ways are not as our ways*; and if the reverſe of theſe flattering ſuppoſitions appear upon the firſt appeal to facts, what courſe muſt a believer take? his courſe is plain and ſafe. He muſt retire to the appropriate and *profeſſed* evidences of his Religion, which form, as it were, a Bulwark to his faith. Here he muſt take his ſtand, though a hoſt of collateral objections ſhould ſtart up, juſt, as in the daily intercourſe of life, he is compelled to chuſe and to act, where the difficulties from the oppoſite ſide may be infinitely multiplied by a prolific imagination, and where many of them are real and unanſwerable.

But will not ſuch behaviour be expoſed to the juſt imputation of weakneſs and partiality? No ſurely. You do not allow the Providence and moral government of God to be diſproved or diſgraced by the difference that ſubſiſts between incontrovertible facts, and the conceptions of fitneſs, which you have formed *independently* of thoſe facts. Why then, ſhould the reality of any religious diſpenſation be called in queſtion, and why ſhould its utility be depreciated, becauſe the ſame difference exiſts? The charge of partiality, will, I think, rather recoil upon thoſe, who, when the means of information are in both caſes equal, and the chances of miſtake in all reaſonings antecedent to that information are, alſo, equal, yet decide with more confidence in one caſe than in the other; and *admit* the rules, when applied to natural Religion, which they *reject*, when applied to ſuch circumſtances in revealed Religion, as are perfectly ſimilar.

In this train may the thoughts of an unprejudiced and cautious examiner proceed. That a Revelation is not ſhocking to the common ſenſe of

 mankind,

mankind, is certain, becauſe, many ſyſtems of falſe Religion are derived from pretended Revelations; becauſe the wiſeſt and beſt heathen expreſſed his wiſhes to be inſtructed, in points of the higheſt moment, by a teacher * from Heaven; becauſe legiſlators, thoſe to whom Chriſtianity was quite unknown, and thoſe by whom it has been partially renounced, a Numa and a Mahomet, found it expedient to ſupport the authority of their own Laws, by claims to a preternatural inſpiration. That God ſhould hold out to ſome of his creatures, that information, which he does not beſtow upon others, is, by no means, incredible, ſince, in the daily and viſible courſe of human affairs, we find an inexhauſtible variety in the uſes, in the meaſures, and the kinds of thoſe gifts, which flow from one common Author, and are conferred upon beings of one common ſpecies. Life is valuable to all men—the deſire of retaining it is implanted in all. But the means of preſerving it, whether by the materials which Nature ſupplies, or by the expedients which Art ſuggeſts, are not equally diſpenſed. Reaſon is neceſſary to our well-being. But the faculty itſelf is different, in different men.—The opportunities of cultivating it are more different; and a yet wider difference ſubſiſts in the advantages that are eventually produced, by its theoretic improvement, and practical application.

When we conſider the general conſtitution of things, we ſhall no longer be ſurpriſed that the Chriſtian Diſpenſation was not immediately followed up by numerous and ſignal conſequences. For reaſons, which the ſhort line of our underſtanding cannot fathom, evil advances with a more apparent rapidity than Good. In the natural word a ſudden, and, *in our apprehenſions*, an inconſiderable ſhock will often do violence to that order of things, which *we call* regular. But the works of the Creation are not reſtored to their ſymmetry or their uſe, ſo far as either of them can be meaſured by our conceptions, without ſlow and almoſt imperceptible gradations. Equally ſilent is the progreſſion of moral improvement. When the ſeminal principles of Vice have been dropped into the mind by ſome accidental cauſe, or induſtriouſly ſown there by the impious hand of the corrupter, they quickly ſhoot up in a wild and rank luxuriance. But the malignity of the ſoil muſt be corrected, and its ſtubborneſs ſubdued, by long and patient culture, before it can cheriſh the ſeeds of Virtue, to their fulleſt vigour. The ſame obſervation may be extended to the manners of mankind. The ruſt of barbariſm muſt be worn off by repeated attritions; nor without the concurrence of many domeſtic and foreign cauſes, without the uſe of arts and of arms, without Laws and Religion, has any laſting poliſh ever been fixed upon the exterior behaviour of a people. In the ſame manner, Chriſtianity,

* Vide Plat. Alcibiad, 2—Page 45. Ninth Edit. Ficin.

nity, deſigned, as it was, to ſtruggle with the moſt rooted prejudices and the fierceſt paſſions of the human mind, did not produce its beneficial effects *completely* and *at once*; and we may without impropriety compare it to *the muſtard ſeed*, in the *ſlowneſs* as well as the height of its growth.

That the religious ſchemes of God bear ſo ſtriking a reſemblance to his natural and his moral diſpenſations, it were folly to controvert; and *that reſemblance*, inſtead of ſupplying any objection to the truth of the Goſpel, conſtitutes a *preſumptive* proof in favour of it, as proceeding from the ſame Author, as intended, together with the ſame diſpenſations, for wiſe purpoſes, and co-operating with them in the ſame plan of final and univerſal good.

It were foreign to my preſent purpoſe to examine that ſolid maſs of hiſtorical and prophetical evidences, upon which, as upon its firmeſt baſis, the great fabrick of Chriſtianity is erected. The ſubject before us rather demanded the aid which analogy ſupplies for the defence of Revelation; and againſt the arguments, which I have now employed, I know not that reaſon can furniſh any *one direct* proof, or a *ſeries of indirect* proofs, equally clear and well connected. Thoſe arguments are, indeed, faſtened by the cloſeſt ties to principles, which may, in the moſt exact acceptation of the word, be ſaid to be founded upon experience. They are intended to ſhew, that in judging of the Divine Attributes, as they reſpect our own ſyſtem, we have no meaſure for determining their effects to be too little or too great, in any caſe which falls under our notice: that the imperfections, ſo incautiouſly imputed to the counſels of heaven, properly belong to the nature of man; and that, upon the more abſtruſe points of Religion, as well as of philoſophy, there will ever be found *more* room for modeſt acquieſcence, than for captious oppoſition. Poſſeſſed of ſuch ſtrength, and applied to ſuch ends, they will not be eaſily overthrown, either by unauthorized conjectures, that God *ſhould* have introduced Chriſtianity at a more early period, or by peeviſh complaints, that he has confined it within *too* narrow boundaries. Inſtead, therefore, of wandering in mazes, where men are often puſhed on, by their pride, to reaſon from what "*they do not know*," our enemies would do well to examine, whether or no, the Chriſtian Religion contain within itſelf the ſeeds of its own deſtruction. We readily confeſs, that no deduction from analogy, no teſtimony from hiſtory, can, in the nature of things, be ſo deciſive, as theſe plain ſuggeſtions of our reaſon, that God cannot patronize a lie; cannot reveal an abſurdity: cannot command the perpetration of a crime. But accuſations of this formidable aſpect are not to be thrown out raſhly, or inſinuated inſidiouſly. 'Till they

be *fairly proved*, many refined and ſubtle arguments that have been employed againſt the credibility of the Goſpel, amount to no more than the hardy and diſputable ſuppoſitions of *finite* creatures, concerning the means which a Creator of *infinite* wiſdom *ought* to employ. On the other hand, the honeſt and humble enquirer, who conſiders the religious diſpenſations of God as forming a part of that incomprehenſible ſcheme, by which the various intereſts of mankind are promoted, will be induced to expect *not fewer* difficulties, than thoſe which throw themſelves in his way, when he balances the proofs, upon which the advocates of Religion would reſt their cauſe. He will not pronounce thoſe proofs unſatisfactory to his *judgment*, becauſe they are inadequate to all the licentious claims, which his *prepoſſeſſions* or his *wiſhes* may ſuggeſt. He will believe that upon theſe, as well as upon other points, God has in his wiſdom beſtowed upon man "*a due degree of ignorance.*"* Every *ſeeming* defect in his own *knowledge*, he will look upon as a limitation of his *moral reſponſibility*, and every kind of *real* information that is vouchſafed to him, he will accept with thankfulneſs, and improve with diligence.

From theſe general remarks, I proceed to examine more particularly the objections againſt which they are pointed. Thoſe objections I ſhall bring forward according to the order, in which they were arranged, in the opening of this diſcourſe. The firſt of them was directed againſt the *late publication* of Chriſtianity.

To ſpeak concerning the agency or the intelligence of God, at once, with perſpicuity and with preciſion, is extremely difficult. His works are unqueſtionably connected together by the relation of cauſe and effect, and viewed by any finite capacity, they exiſt in a *ſucceſſive ſeries*. But to the Deity himſelf, who is *properly infinite*, no duration, compounded of diviſible parts, no diſtinctions of paſt, preſent, and future, can, perhaps, be † ſtrictly applied

* Vide Pope's Eſſay on Man, Book the Firſt, Line 283.

† A different repreſentation of God's knowledge has been maintained, with great originality of thought, and great acuteneſs of reaſoning, by a writer in the Theological Repoſitory, who ſigns himſelf Clemens. He, there, unfolds thoſe principles of *aſſociation*, by which a mind that is engaged in the purſuit of *ultimate good*, quickly paſſes over every intermediate ſtep; and in proportion to the excellence of this aſſociating faculty, he eſtimates the intellectual and moral excellence of all beings. From the operations of the human underſtanding, we know, that, as it is more frequently and vigouroufly exerted, it gradually acquires a kind of *artificial intuition*, and traverſes a wider compaſs, by a ſwifter progreſs. In a degree, therefore, that ſurpaſſes our conception, beings of ſuperior natures may be ſuppoſed to reach the moſt diſtant point of contemplation, by a proceſs rapid without irregularity, and complex without confuſion. Some property of this ſort, he would, in its higheſt perfection, aſcribe to the Deity. While this mode of conceiving the Divine counſels is acknowledged to be not *wholly adequate* to the ſubject, it may be

applied. He, indeed, perceives with equal diſtinctneſs, the moſt diſtant events and the moſt near. He directs with equal facility, the cauſes neceſſary to accompliſh them; and while ſhort-ſighted, impatient men complain of lingering, of interruption, and of incoherence in the deſigns of their Maker, he is, in fact, executing the beſt purpoſes by the beſt methods.

Now, in reſpect to a Being, whoſe comprehenſion thus pervades *all poſſibilities* in all points of duration, I ſee not the force of any concluſion, which may be drawn from the mere conſideration of time, ſo as to juſtify us in denying the *reality*, or arraigning the *expediency* of his meaſures. I am confident, at leaſt, that the objection we are now conſidering is indeciſive and even *fallacious*, ſo far as it affects the cauſe of Chriſtianity; for, had the Goſpel been publiſhed a thouſand years earlier, thoſe, who were *then* living, might have rejected it, becauſe it was not publiſhed a thouſand years before. Since creation is equally the work of God with redemption, we might as well complain, that we were not made, as that we were not redeemed, juſt at the time we imagined *moſt fit*; and were the objection removed as to *ourſelves*, it might be, in perpetual ſucceſſion, adopted by our *poſterity*. In what proof then, does this argument, if it be well founded, terminate? A certain portion of time muſt have exiſted before either event, and therefore the proper inference *a priori* is, that we ſhould never be created or redeemed at all.

But Chriſtianity, exclaims the objector, is, in the ſplendid language of its panegyriſts, deſcribed as a ſyſtem, perfect in itſelf, and eſſentially neceſſary to the ſalvation of mankind. How then *can* that be neceſſary to the everlaſting welfare of God's creatures, which was not known, till the probationary ſtate of many amongſt them was at end? And how can that ſcheme be called perfect, which does not include the ſpiritual intereſts of *all* the world? To this ſpecious reaſoning it may be replied, that neceſſity and perfection are relative terms, and are to be underſtood with reſtrictions, when applied to any part of the Divine Government. As God is poſſeſſed of wiſdom to chooſe all ends, and of power to controul all means, whatever is *expedient* in the eyes of *ſuch a being*, is, upon *that account*, *neceſſary*—or, in other words, becauſe it *ought* to be done, *it cannot but be done*. The proof of the fact, in ſuch caſes, always involves the proof of neceſſity, in the ſenſe juſt explained to

be uſefully employed in *explaining* the clearneſs and extent of the Divine Preſcience, and in repreſſing that confidence, which ill-becomes our dark and circumſcribed apprehenſions. Even upon the hypotheſis of Clemens, we may perceive the incompetency of man, and the competency of God, to determine concerning *the fulneſs of time*.

to you, and the actual uſe of any means, is a ſufficient warrant for us to pronounce them perfect, or accommodated to their reſpective ends. We do not, however, ſay, for we are neither required nor authorized to ſay, that Chriſtianity is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the ſalvation of thoſe perſons, to whom it was *not* communicated. *They* may have been capable of arriving at a leſs degree of happineſs, by the aſſiſtance of leſs inſtruction; and they will, aſſuredly, be judged, according to their uſe of *one* talent, where it was not the will of God to entruſt them with *five*. But, ſo far as our information reaches, the *particular* virtues which Chriſtianity inculcates, could not have been practiſed, the particular recompence which it propoſes, could not have been obtained, but by the declaration of a law circumſtanced as the Goſpel was. Conſequently, if God intended to ſave us by that Goſpel, to guide us by a *better* law than others were directed to obey, to qualify us for a *greater* ſhare of felicity than others were permitted to reach, it is, in reſpect to *us*, who are the objects of it, both neceſſary and perfect. It is *ſo* neceſſary that the ſame degree of happineſs *could* not be attained under any other ſyſtem of Religion, that has hitherto been known. It is *ſo* perfect, that the ſame happineſs certainly *will* be attained under the ſyſtem we have embraced.

Chriſtianity, it ſhould ever be conſidered, profeſſes to be deſigned for fallen creatures, or, in the language of the Scriptures, *Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners*. Why, indeed, evil exiſts, from what fountain it ſprung, and through what channels it is conveyed, are queſtions where we are more forward to enquire, than able to decide. Yet, ſurely, if the Attributes of God can be vindicated in the *permiſſion* of vice, that vindication will extend even to the gradual removal of it.

In the nature of things, ſome interval muſt have elapſed, between the firſt exiſtence of the Evil, and the firſt application of the remedy. Concerning the *proper duration* of that evil, we may dogmatize much, but can demonſtrate nothing. Equally wiſe in themſelves, though unknown to us, are *moſt* of the reaſons, for which, Sin was either ſuffered to enter the World at any time, or was checked in its courſe, at *one* time, rather than *another*.

But whatever opinions we may form concerning the origin of evil, the expediency of Chriſtianity is chiefly concerned in this fact, that we are, *indeed*, ſinful. We may therefore aſk, is it poſſible that God ſhould ſuffer his creatures to ſink into a ſtate of wickedneſs? Is it not conſiſtent with the attributes of God to deliver them from it? Has the Goſpel a tendency to

effect

effect ſuch deliverance? As to the firſt queſtion, we muſt acknowledge the heathen world to have been immerſed in the moſt deplorable corruption, both of manners and opinion. Concerning the ſecond, the moſt abandoned unbeliever can ſcarce entertain a momentary doubt. The laſt it will not be eaſy to prove in the negative, if the genuine doctrines of the Goſpel, the encouragement it gives to virtue, and the reſtraint it lays upon vice, be ſeriouſly and impartially conſidered.

That God winked at * or, (as the word may be leſs offenſively tranſlated,) that he overlooked the errors and the degeneracy of former ages, is a point where many unbelievers are agreed with us. But the Chriſtian maintains, that, in the fulneſs of time, God publiſhed a Law, for the ſake of rectifying thoſe errors, and of reforming that degeneracy. The infidel, who profeſſes a regard equally delicate, and a zeal equally ſincere, for the honour of his Maker, aſſerts the contrary. Whoſe hypotheſis, think ye, redounds *moſt* to the glory of God? According to the tenets of the Chriſtian, the depravity of mankind, and the long train of miſeries attendant on it, *have*, in ſome meaſure, been leſſened, and *will* be leſſened yet further. If the infidel be right, the remedy of an acknowledged evil *has not yet* been applied; and though, according to the natural deſcent of things from bad to worſe, the longer any ſalutary expedient is delayed, the more urgent becomes the occaſion for it, that *very delay* conſtitutes a preſumption, that *no* ſuch expedient *ever* will be applied. I will not inſult your underſtandings by entering into any ſuperfluous compariſon, between hypotheſes ſo notoriouſly diſproportionate, in point, both of good ſenſe, and of piety.

I mean not to ſpeak with intemperate indignation of thoſe arrogant and almoſt excluſive claims, which ſome champions of Infidelity have ſet up, to a correct and enlarged way of thinking. But I wiſh them to conſider, whether the invectives, which they have thrown out againſt the *late* publication of the Goſpel, be not the reſult of reaſonings, as *narrow*, as they are erroneous. Near and remote, great and little, are relative expreſſions; and each of them may be applied to the *ſame* object, as it is viewed through *different* mediums. Thus the four thouſand years, which preceded the appearance of the Goſpel, may ſwell, in our imaginations, to a ſtupendous bulk, on the ſuppoſition that the world were to continue in its redeemed ſtate for twice or three times that ſpace. But, if the world be ordained to continue forty thouſand years after the coming of Chriſt, the time, that preceded it, will ſhrink into a leſs formidable compaſs; and, as there is no

* ὑπεριδεῖν.

no apparent abſurdity in ſuppoſing the duration of our preſent ſyſtem to be extended *indefinitely*, the proportion of the definite time that paſſed before the miſſion of Chriſt may, by gradual dimunitions, be reduced to a very trifling, and, as it were, fugitive quantity.

If the progreſs which mankind have lately made in the arts of ſocial life, if the important enquiries, in which philoſophy has been engaged, if the unexplored paths it has opened for new inveſtigation, be brought into one point of view, we may be led to imagine, that the world has not yet reached more than a ſtate of comparative infancy. Should this be the caſe, and ſhould our future improvements flow on with an equal, or an increaſing tide of ſucceſs, poſterity may *reverſe* the argument. Tracing back the growing excellence of their fellow-creatures through the ſtages it ſhall have *already* paſſed, they may look up with admiration and thankfulneſs to that Being, who according to their eſtimate of things, interpoſed ſo *ſpeedily* in behalf of his creatures. But without having recourſe to ſuch deſcriptions of ſucceeding ages, as are neither unpleaſing nor incredible, we may find, upon a retroſpective view of the condition in which mankind has been placed, many *probable* arguments for the truth of St. Paul's aſſertion, that in the fulneſs of time God ſent forth his Son.

Had the Almighty ordained a more early period for the Goſpel, we might have loſt much of that evidence which ariſes from Prophecy.

The Son of God appeared at a ſeaſon, when the propagation of his Religion was much facilitated by the extent of the Roman Empire, and the popularity of the Greek language. But, if he had lived in the days of Moſes, the little intercourſe that prevailed between nation and nation, the very inconſiderable proficiency of mankind in Arts and Language, the total want of concurrent hiſtorical teſtimony, and a variety of other circumſtances, which were not unfriendly to the Jewiſh Law, intended as it was to operate for a ſhort time, and among an obſcure people, might have proved very powerful impediments to the eſtabliſhment and the diffuſion of the Chriſtian Law.

The Goſpel, upon its firſt publication, was in many inſtances affected by the civil and the political ſtate of Judea. But the ſpirit of the Moſaic Inſtitutions was quite exhauſted, and the obſervance of many precepts was ſcarce practicable, during the ſubjection of the Jews to the Roman yoke. Deprived, therefore, as was this people, of the advantages which had reſulted from ceremonial duties, it was *likely*, or at leaſt it

was

was *proper* for them, to have turned their attention more readily towards a Ritual leſs irkſome, and a ſcheme of morality far more adapted to their intellectual and ſocial improvements. As prophecy had long ceaſed among them, they might have been induced to conſider the miracles of Chriſt, as a *renewal* of thoſe divine interpoſitions, with which their fore-fathers had been honoured. The opinions concerning a future ſtate, which they had caught up during their captivity at Babylon, and their intercourſe with the Romans, ſhould have prepared them to welcome a Religion, which *enlightens** the comfortable doctrines of life and immortality. Had the arrival of the Meſſiah been haſtened, the expectations of the Jew would not have been excited to a ſufficient pitch of ſollicitude. Had it been longer delayed, thoſe expectations, which eventually induced many perſons to examine the claims of Chriſt, and ſome to admit them, might have languiſhed after repeated diſappointments.

In this queſtion concerning the fulneſs of time, the ſtate of the heathen world deſerves our conſideration. If the Goſpel had been preached in a very barbarous age, the reception of it would, probably, have been aſcribed to the want of ability, or the want of inclination to detect impoſture, to the artifices of prieſts, or the credulity of the vulgar. But it challenged the attention of mankind at a moſt enlightened æra, when the jealous wiſdom of politicians, and the no leſs jealous pride of philoſophers were leagued againſt religious innovation. The ſame cauſes which harraſſed Chriſtianity during its growth, muſt, if its vital principle had not been ſound, have ſtifled it in its very birth. The ſame oppoſition, that had been rouſed, in the reign of Auguſtus, againſt falſe miracles, muſt have hunted down the credit of the Chriſtian miracles, had they not been really performed. The ſame vigilance, which afterwards dragged to light all the childiſh fallacies of Apollonius Tyanæus, would have been more fatally employed, in cruſhing the firmer and more intereſting pretenſions of Chriſt.

The ceremonies preſcribed by the religions of antiquity tended to debaſe the ſpirit, and even to deprave the morals of the people. As to the doctrines of philoſophy, they were ſeldom employed, as, in truth, they were ſeldom *qualified*, to remedy the evil. It muſt, however, be confeſſed that the more important truths of Religion, ſuch, I mean, as relate to a providence and a future ſtate, though intermixed with many errors, yet retained a *feeble* hold upon the minds of the multitude, and produced, too, a

 partial

* φωτίσαντος ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν. Tim. Epiſt. 2. Cap. i. V. 10.

partial effect upon their behaviour. To arraign and to ridicule ſuch truths, was a diſtinction reſerved for thoſe preſumptuous ſophiſts, whom their infatuated admirers affect to exalt as the guides of life, though they ſpeculated for the ſake of victory, not of truth; though they confounded the *received* notions of right and wrong, without ſubſtituting others more *intelligible* and more *uſeful*; though they veiled the being and attributes of the Deity in artificial obſcurity, and often thruſt out his wretched creatures from the verge of his protection.

It were unjuſt to extend theſe ſevere accuſations, to all the philoſophers of antiquity. Sacred, in the boſom of every friend to learning and virtue, be the memory of the *illuſtrious Few* among them, who endeavoured to connect their more abſtruſe reſearches with the improvement of morality, and the deareſt intereſts of mankind. But their ſucceſs generally fell ſhort of their hopes. Tully, whoſe veneration for Plato bordered upon idolatry, yet confeſſes, that the moſt ingenious arguments of that Writer upon the immortality of the Soul impreſſed only a precarious momentary conviction, even upon a mind that wiſhed them true; and Brutus, in his dying moments, lamented, that virtue itſelf was but an empty name.

Thus in the groſs miſtakes and abject ſuperſtition of the vulgar, in the uncertainty of the beſt philoſophers, and the impiety of the worſt, we have moſt convincing proofs that a Divine Revelation was not entirely *unſeaſonable*. In reality, all the inſtances of what reaſon *did not do*, are more ſatisfactory evidences of its comparative inſufficiency, than the romantic ſuppoſitions and confident aſſertions of ſome men, concerning what it *might have done*. The world, it is true, has been amuſed by many ſubtle diſtinctions between the "energies" and the "capacities" of reaſon among the ancients. At all events, however, if the defects imputed to them had a real exiſtence, the expediency of Revelation to ſupply thoſe defects, is nearly the ſame, whether they aroſe from inability or inaction, from unfavourable circumſtances, or injudicious exertion.

For the purpoſe of depreciating revelation *indirectly*, magnificent encomiums have, I know, been laviſhed upon the Law of Nature, * and upon the

* The law of Nature is, I know, uſually underſtood in the ſenſe of a law *not revealed*. But this acceptation is, I believe, too confined in itſelf, and has been the cauſe of many difficulties to the advocates of the Goſpel, in their diſputes with Infidels. Nature includes *all* the works of God. Revelation is intimately connected with thoſe works; it holds a diſtinguiſhed place among them; and the precepts and evidences of it are included in the law of Nature, according to that ſenſe of the word, which is at once the moſt proper and the moſt comprehenſive. Revelation, therefore,

the Light of Nature. The utility of both has been impertinently exaggerated, and their diſtinct properties have been imprudently, not to ſay, inſidiouſly, confounded. The Law of Nature, abſtractedly conſidered, is, I ſay not, *eternal* and *immutable*, but co-extended and co-eval with all the works of Nature. It comprehends the moral fitneſs of things, ariſing from their ſpecific qualities, and mutual relations, and, as ſuch, is, in its full magnitude, known only by the Being who ordained it. On the other hand, the Light of Nature * implies a limited, and, in man, a *very* limited and very fluctuating knowledge of that law, together with the obligations reſulting from ſuch knowledge, and increaſing in proportion to it. This light was, moreover, in the heathen world, faint and unſteady, as we may diſcover from the numerous imperfections both of the learned and the unlearned. But, amidſt the melancholy ſtate of things, in which they were placed, what can be conceived more deſirable to a well-diſpoſed mind, than an authoritative and unequivocal declaration of the Divine Will? How abſurdly ſhould we ſuppoſe any man to have reaſoned, how perverſely ſhould we pronounce him to have acted, if he had ſpurned away the aids, which revelation offers, from *himſelf*, only, becauſe they had not been tendered to his *forefathers?*

As an experimental ſenſe of calamity quickens the exerciſe of compaſſion to others, ſo the conſciouſneſs of paſt imperfections may have been very efficacious in producing that humble docility of mind, which, in the firſt ages of the Goſpel, was, eminently and peculiarly, a requiſite qualification for converſion. It diſpoſed, no doubt, many impartial perſons to welcome the glad tidings of Salvation, after the inconveniencies they had long ſuffered, from that reſtleſs uncertainty, from thoſe wavering hopes, from thoſe tormenting fears, which ſeem to have been the lot of the beſt men, to whom reaſon was their *only guide*.

therefore, is to be diſtinguiſhed from the law of Nature, as a part from *the whole*. The Biſhop of Carliſle, in his admirable conſiderations on the theory of Religion, has laid open the abſurd and fallacious ſignifications which have been aſſigned to the *Law of Nature*. The ſame excellent Prelate has alſo reſcued the word *Reaſon* from the narrow and erroneous ſenſe in which it is often employed by controverſial writers. He has enumerated with great accuracy all the various "Talents which together make up our portion of *Reaſon*, and ſeverally "contribute to the forming our underſtanding, and improving our *Nature*." Vide Page 4. Edit. 3.

* I am here ſpeaking of the Light of Nature, as it exiſts, where no Revelation is known. But according to the principles I have laid down in the foregoing note, the Light of Nature, in a Chriſtian, includes all the knowledge he has acquired of the Laws of Nature, whether revealed or unrevealed. When my meaning is impartially conſidered, the propriety of my language will, I hope, attone for its *ſingularity*.

I do not inſiſt upon theſe circumſtances as *abſolutely deciſive*; and, yet, they carry with them the weight of *probability*, 'till they be counter-balanced by oppoſite arguments founded upon the known condition of mankind. I dare not hold them out as the *ſole*, or the *principal*, reaſons, which conſtituted the fulneſs of time, in the *ſight of God*. But, in the ſight of man, they ſhew the period aſſigned for the birth of Chriſt, not to have been *totally unfit* for the profeſſed purpoſes of his miſſion; and with this concluſion we may be ſatisfied, 'till our adverſaries produce equal proofs for ſome *other* period, that was *more fit*.

I now proceed to obviate the ſecond objection, which, as you may remember, was levelled againſt the partial propagation of the Goſpel. We may obſerve both of this, and of the preceding complaint, that they preſuppoſe the excellence of the Chriſtian ſcheme, even while they depreciate its credibility; for, if it be not calculated to correct the morals, and promote the well-being of mankind, why ſhould we be offended, either that it was not more early publiſhed, or more widely diſſeminated?

It wears, ſurely, the moſt offenſive aſpect of paradox, that the very property, which ought to endear the Goſpel to thoſe by whom it is known, ſhould prejudice them againſt it; and that the acknowledged utility of the Goſpel ſhould be diſtorted into an argument againſt its truth.

In the daily courſe of human affairs, the dignity of the benefactor is generally ſuppoſed to throw a new luſtre around his gifts. But, leſt the claims of Chriſtianity to a divine original ſhould procure *too much* reverence, the warm ſpirit of religious gratitude muſt, it ſeems, be chilled by, I know not what, cold diſtinctions of ſcepticiſm, and that honeſt prejudice, which, with the happieſt conſequences, meaſures things by perſons, is to be controuled by the ſterneſt ſeverities of, *perhaps*, miſapplied inveſtigation. I ſay, miſapplied, becauſe the unworthineſs of man to *demand* a preternatural interpoſition at the hands of his Maker, has been ſometimes miſconſtrued into an *incapacity* to become the object of ſuch interpoſition; and becauſe the partial *improbability* that God *would* interpoſe, has been alledged as an evidence of the actual *impoſſibility* that he *ſhould* interpoſe.

Particular diſtinctions are uſually looked upon as the ground of particular obligation. As men excell each other in affluence of fortune, in ſplendour of ſituation, or in vigour of intellect, new means of happineſs are ſuppoſed to be conferred upon them, and new returns of gratitude are expected from them, upon every principle of common ſenſe and common juſtice. But, when *Religion* is concerned, the rules, which

which induce us more readily to accept, and more highly to value the inferior bleſſings, which God beſtows, are, in the opinion of ſome men, ſuddenly *ſuſpended*, and by an *inverted* mode of argumentation, we are taught to reject the *greater* bleſſing, though it be ſaid to proceed from the ſame gracious Author. Inſtead of acknowledging and applying the aſſiſtances that are offered to ourſelves, we endeavour to conceal the pride of falſe philoſophy under the ſpecious colouring of a falſe philanthropy: we turn away our attention from our own abundance, to the wants of others: we affect to be offended at the difference between them and ourſelves, though it neither increaſe nor leſſen our own power of being *happy*; and we curiouſly pry into the cauſes of that difference, which are, for the moſt part, treaſured up in the depths of Omniſcience, and which, if they were declared to us, might neither relax nor enforce our obligation to be virtuous. To what point, then, does the objection before us ultimately tend? If it be *not* abſolutely deſigned to alienate us from Chriſtianity, it is ſurely imprudent in thoſe who employ it, to excite a ſpirit of diſcontent againſt the uſefulneſs of that law, by which we *ſhould* be governed here, and *muſt* be judged hereafter. If it be deſigned to alienate us from that law, let us apply the touchſtone of analogy to an argument, which is thought of ſufficient moment to warrant our *deliberate apoſtacy*.

Suppoſe now, that any nation guided by the counſels, and animated under the auſpices, of a Numa or a Lycurgus, were emerging from barbariſm. Would it be a juſt reaſon for them to relapſe *voluntarily* into the evils from which they were beginning to eſcape, becauſe neighbouring countries were *yet* expoſed to the ſame evils, and unhappily were not provided with the ſame means of alleviation? Would it not be a reaſon for ſelf-congratulation, if they *excluſively* poſſeſſed the power of making further *advances* in civilization, and for ſelf-applauſe, if they uſed that power faithfully and diligently?

But the Deity, it ſeems, who is the common parent of us all, will not ſuffer *any* of his creatures to periſh, while he has amply furniſhed *others* with the means of ſafety. This is a very common, and it is a very *erroneous* method of ſtating the queſtion.—For, it ſhould not be aſked, will God be *kind* to you, and *unkind* to another—but, will he be *more* kind to you, than he has been to another?

Has not the Deity made a difference between brutes and men? Yet he is the wiſe Creator and Preſerver of both. Has he not beſtowed upon *men*, the external materials of earthly good, and, probably, the internal capa-

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city of uſing them, in different degrees? Yet he is the juſt Governor of *all*. If then, intending ſome of his moral agents for *leſs* felicity in another life, he leave them to reaſon, and at the ſame time confer the aids of Revelation, upon thoſe, who are intended for *greater* felicity, he is ſtill the righteous judge of all. And ſhall our eye be *evil*, becauſe the Eye of our Maker is good—*not*, as in the caſe of the labourers in the vineyard, to *others*, but to *ourſelves*, to our friends, to our country, and to our poſterity? Far be ſuch ſhocking preſumption, ſuch black ingratitude, from thoſe, among whom God has ſent forth his Son!

If limitation, in point of *time* be no ſolid objection to the rectitude of the Divine Government, as we have ſeen under the former head, limitation in point of *place* may be equally conſiſtent with it. The truth is, that God diſpenſes or with-holds his gifts, that he deals them out in various meaſures, and aſſigns to them various uſes, quite regardleſs of all our churliſh diſcontent, and all our captious ſophiſms, and ever intent upon the execution of that plan, which *himſelf* has formed, by the methods, of which *himſelf* approves.

But, could not the Deity, when Chriſt appeared upon earth, have commiſſioned other teachers to publiſh the ſame law? In ſpeaking of this queſtion, I will not rigorouſly inſiſt upon ſome peculiarities, which are ſaid to be rivetted to the Perſon of Chriſt, and which, in the opinion of many wiſe and good men, are incommunicable. I will confeſs, that God *could* have appointed other inſtructors, capable of working miracles, and of preaching morality, in the *ſame* manner, as he *could* have ſent Jeſus Chriſt into Judea long before. But the *poſſibility* of ſuch a proceeding, which, after all, is only *hypothetical*, by no means eſtabliſhes the *propriety* of it. On the contrary, if the ſtate of mankind be accurately conſidered, it is ſcarce conceivable that Chriſtianity ſhould have been ſpread with any *conſiderable* effect through the various nations, which fill up the immenſe chaſm lying between the ſummit of refinement, and the extreme point of ſavage life.

Thus, many of the rules that were adapted to the poliſhed Roman, would have been uſeleſs to the rugged Scythian. The ſame doctrines, that were intelligible in one country, would, in another, have been totally unintelligible. The ſame ſyſtem, which to the Greek was offenſively ſimple, would to the Barbarian have been as offenſively complex. By ſome men, the preaching of the Apoſtles would have been heard, at firſt, with cold indifference, and afterwards aſſented to with confuſed and undigeſted ſentiments

ments of approbation. By others, it would have been eagerly, embraced in the tumultuous phrenzy of admiration, and abandoned, as eagerly upon a ſudden ſally of caprice. The fact is, that ſome *previous diſcipline* both of the underſtanding and of the temper, was neceſſary to prepare men for the admiſſion of the Goſpel; and *that* diſcipline was ſcarce to be found, in the unſettled plans of living, and the unſocial caſt of manners, which prevailed almoſt over the whole face of the earth, when Chriſt appeared.

I do not take upon myſelf to affirm, that *no* perſons, under the diſadvantages here alluded to, would have been converted. I know that ſurpriſing changes are *ſometimes* accompliſhed, by patient perſeverance, by dexterity of management, and, above all, by *fortunate combinations of circumſtances*, which human wiſdom can neither produce nor foreſee. But the number of converts would have been, in all probability, not conſiderable, if any inference may be drawn from the ſlow and interrupted progreſs, which Chriſtianity now makes, in very uncivilized nations. We find, that the attention of men is there divided between repelling the immediate attacks of war, and procuring a ſcanty ſubſiſtence for peace; that their minds are not eaſily weaned from hereditary and habitual partialities to eſtabliſhed cuſtoms and traditional opinions; that their ſtupidity is as deplorable as their ſuperſtition; that their ſtubbornneſs becomes more untractable, from the ignorance with which it is aſſociated; and that their actions, unleſs thrown out of their courſe by the excentricities of impetuous paſſion, roll on with a dull unvaried uniformity approaching to inſtinct.

Happily for Chriſtianity, theſe impediments to its propagation in the preſent age, are *notorious*, and therefore the doctrines of it are not charged with any diſgraceful inſufficiency. But, if the efficacy of thoſe doctrines had been tried *without effect* upon nations, who, in earlier times, laboured under inconveniencies *ſimilar* to thoſe which I have been here deſcribing, the miſcarriage which is now excuſed, becauſe it can be *accounted for*, would have been imputed to ſome original defects in the evidence, or ſome relative impropriety in the precepts of the Goſpel; and they who object to us, that it was not taught in uncivilized countries, would have been the foremoſt to ſcoff at the attempt, and to triumph in the diſappointment. I ſhould *rather* ſay, that the *ſucceſs* of ſuch an attempt would have provoked ſharper and more pointed ridicule. The acquiſition of a *few unenlightened and unpoliſhed converts*, would ſcarce have been ſufficient to lift up Chriſtianity to the *eſteem* of ſuch perſons, as now treat it with *contempt*. They who expatiate with the moſt indecent and moſt unjuſt ſeverity upon the ignorance, the credulity, and the ſuperſtition of the Jews, would have urged the ſame defects in its profeſſors, to the diſcredit of the Goſpel, if the

the reception of it among *barbarians* had been alledged, as an argument, in favour either of its credibility, or its excellence. When, therefore, it is aſked, why Chriſtianity was not preached in *all* places at the *ſame* time, we may reply, that God accommodates his religious diſpenſations to the intellectual and ſocial circumſtances of his creatures; that thoſe circumſtances, in their *utmoſt extent*, are known to him alone: that the character of the *Chriſtian* muſt, in general, be grafted upon the character of the *man*; and that, if a judgment may be formed of *paſt* ages from the *preſent*, the ſtock, that was *wild*, would, alſo, have frequently, been *barren*.

But do not ſeventeen hundred years leave ſufficient room for the univerſal diffuſion of the chriſtian law? To our conceptions, that ſpace may appear very *long*; nevertheleſs to him who counts a thouſand years as one day, the ſame ſpace may be conſidered as *too ſhort* for the introduction of *ſo* great a change as the objection contends for, or, indeed, of any *greater* than has been hitherto effected. Between the appearance, and the propagation of the Goſpel, ſome time *muſt* have intervened; and if it had been publiſhed in any *other* age, or in any other country, we have no poſitive proof, that the reception of it would have been more favourable, or the progreſs of it more ſwift.—*Unknown* impediments, far ſurpaſſing thoſe with which it has ſtruggled, and over which it has triumphed, *might* have ſprung up, and the cauſes, which we *know* to have aſſiſted it, might have been leſs efficacious, or, might have had no exiſtence.

The ſubject before us may catch a kind of ſide-light, from the manner in which the Goſpel has been propagated among Chriſtians, and which, in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs of Language, may be called *partial*. While the Apoſtles attended upon their Maſter, we ſhould ſuppoſe this the moſt proper ſeaſon for the fulleſt communication of religious knowledge; but the Deity, even in giving effect to miraculous interpoſitions, neglects not the uſe of moral cauſes. The prejudices of the Apoſtles were not *totally* ſubdued, nor their miſtakes *inſtantaneouſly* rectified. Many things which their Maſter ſaid not, becauſe their minds were not able to bear them, were, in *the fulneſs of time*, conveyed by the ſuper-natural effuſions of the ſpirit; and even *after* thoſe effuſions had been vouchſafed, their underſtandings ſeemed to have been ſuſceptible of continual improvement, as well from the efforts of reaſon, as from the aids of grace. Thus the attachment of the Jews to ceremonial obſervances was not torn up *violently*, and *at once*, but gradually lopped away. The *whole* light of the Goſpel did not burſt out *in a moment* upon the minds of the Gentiles. Many truths that were, for a time, obſcured in the gloom of Popery, are now brought forth into

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open day; and from *ſome* errors, which *yet* keep their ground in Proteſtant countries, poſterity, we truſt, will be happily delivered. As, therefore, the goodneſs of God is not impeached by the progreſſive communication of his will to thoſe perſons by whom his Goſpel is known, his wiſdom may be vindicated in regard to that entire ignorance of the Goſpel, in which whole communities of men are now involved.

Let me not be *miſunderſtood*. Chriſtianity is a word capable of *various* acceptations. Sometimes it implies the *doctrines* of Chriſt; and in *this* ſenſe of the expreſſion, Chriſtianity can neither be increaſed nor diminiſhed. Sometimes it ſignifies all the *evidences*, *effects*, and *circumſtances*, belonging to the whole ſcheme of our redemption. But thoſe evidences are more or leſs ſtriking; thoſe effects are more or leſs rapid; and thoſe circumſtances vary, at various times, and in various places. The capacity of man to underſtand, and act up to the doctrines of Chriſt, is, we know, unavoidably affected by many collateral cauſes, which are in a continual, though it be ſometimes an imperceptible, fluctuation. In conſequence of theſe irregularities, which neceſſarily ariſe from the preſent conſtitution of the world, the cauſe of the Goſpel ſometimes, *appears* to be endangered by outward violence, and ſometimes, to languiſh with internal decay. Yet, upon the *whole* we have reaſon to pronounce, that it is on the advance; and the time will, at laſt, arrive when the knowledge of it ſhall pervade every country, where it has *not* been hitherto taught, and when every country, where it *has* been taught, ſhall acquire *more juſt* and *more comprehenſive* notions concerning the import of its doctrines, the credibility of its proofs, the connection of its various parts, and the utility of its general deſign.

For this auſpicious and extenſive improvement in the religious ſtate of man, every philoſophical believer muſt acknowledge a viſible, though remote, preparation of cauſes, in the wide diffuſion of commerce, in the ſucceſsful cultivation of ſcience, in the invention of printing, in the diſcovery of the weſtern world, and in a variety of other particulars, which no friend to mankind can contemplate without wonder, or mention without exultation.

Let us not, then, be alarmed at the miſ-placed ſarcaſms, or the tragical lamentations of thoſe, who firſt exclaim, that the Goſpel is impriſoned within very narrow boundaries, and then, rudely endeavour to baniſh it from the ſpot, which it already occupies. Rather ought we to reflect upon the numerous and complicated difficulties, which it has already encoun-

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tered with ſucceſs. *More eſpecially* are we intereſted in recollecting, that God having accompanied the firſt Revelation of his will with miraculous ſigns, has entruſted the further propagation of it to *human* agency. This indeed is a point, intimately connected with our practice as well as our ſpeculations, nor can it, without impropriety, be over-looked in this part of our ſubject—we may not be able to comprehend the *counſels of God*; but the enquiry is not altogether fruitleſs, if, in the courſe of it, we diſcern the *duty of man.*

The relation, in which the Goſpel *now* ſtands to us as moral agents, is different, according to the talents with which we are reſpectively endowed, and the ſituations in which we are reſpectively placed. To *ſome* men, it forms a part of their tryal, whether they will believe or reject Chriſtianity—to others, whether they will obſtruct or promote the reception of it. When, therefore, the limited diffuſion of the Goſpel is urged, as a proof againſt its divine authority, we ſhould not forget, that the charge is uſually alledged by thoſe, who have the *leaſt right* to alledge it—by thoſe, who multiply *artificial* obſtacles, for the ſake of bringing an odium upon ſuch as are *inevitable*—by thoſe, who *induſtriouſly create* the very imperfection, againſt which they *clamorouſly inveigh.*

In all religious enquiries, I wiſh to ſee zeal tempered by diſcretion; and as I ſometimes lament that the belief of the Goſpel is not rooted in the love of virtue, I do not always ſuſpect the diſbelief of it, to originate in a predilection for vice. But upon queſtions of ſuch moment, we cannot be too much upon our guard againſt endangering the peace and innocence of other men, by the keeneſs of raillery, by the ſubtlety of ſophiſtry, and the impoſing force of exaggerated deſcription. Whatever ſentiments, therefore, it may be the lot of ſome men to entertain concerning the authority of the *extraordinary original* aſcribed to Chriſtianity, they cannot, I think, have any doubts as to the utility of its *ordinary effects*. Even in the *loweſt* point of view, it forms an evident and a *conſiderable* part of that moral government, which *God* has eſtabliſhed in the ſyſtem to which we belong. It *cannot* diſcourage us in the practice of our moſt arduous duties; it cannot impede us in the purſuit of our nobleſt intereſts; and, therefore, every indignity *wantonly* offered to it, calls aloud for puniſhment from that Being, in whom, the injured rights of morality, by *whatever* ſpeculative principles it may be promoted, will unqueſtionably find a moſt juſt and terrible avenger. But, if the claims of Chriſtianity be, as we truſt they *are, of a higher order*; if *prophecies* have been vouchſafed, and *miracles* have been worked, to authenticate and to *ſanctify* it, the influence of ſuch a *diſpenſation*

ſation can hardly be *too* extenſive, and the uſe or neglect of every opportunity, that is given us, of making it *more* extenſive, remains, no longer, a matter of indifference.

In oppoſition to this aſſertion, a queſtion has been aſked, to which, though it breathe the ſpirit of cavil rather than argument, I will not refuſe a ſerious anſwer. Has man a *right*, even where he has the ability, to diffuſe the knowledge of the Divine Will among thoſe people, whoſe ignorance of it ſeems to proceed from *Divine appointment?* Undoubtedly he is poſſeſſed of ſuch a right; he is accountable for the exerciſe of it; he derives his *own* acquaintance with Chriſtianity from the exerciſe of the ſame right in *other* men; and he muſt know, that as preternatural means are no longer employed, this is the *only* method by which the Goſpel *can* be propagated. Where any evil whatever exiſts, you have a proof that God did *not* intend altogether to *prevent* that evil. Where you have the power of alleviating it, you have an equal proof that God *does* intend it *to be alleviated*. The knowledge of the Divine intention, is inſeparable from the knowledge of the *human means*, by which it may be executed. The conſciouſneſs of your power, is attended with a proportionate *obligation* to exert it.

To entangle virtue in unneceſſary ſcruples is always dangerous; and there is reaſon to ſuſpect, that many who indulge thoſe ſcruples, are providing an excuſe for their own lazineſs, in the anticipation of imaginary diſappointment. But the line of duty is ſtrait and plain; and from this line, he will ever be wandering, who *abſtains* from immediate and practicable *good*, leſt *evil* ſhould *indirectly* come. We do not counteract the deſigns of Providence by the communication, either of *temporal* or of *ſpiritual* bleſſings; and moſt meritorious in the ſight of God will be the labours of that Chriſtian, who ſpreads wide the influence of the Goſpel, at once, vindicated by his arguments, and adorned by his example.

We are now arrived at the laſt objection, which I propoſed to conſider —namely, the imperfect efficacy of the Goſpel. And here, my brethren, while, in well-meant, and well-directed zeal for the honour of our Religion, we endeavour to defend it from the attacks of its adverſaries, we cannot but lament thoſe faults among its friends, which give occaſion for ſuch defence.

The cauſe, and, in reſpect to God, the *juſtification* of theſe faults, are to be found in the freedom of man——in that freedom, *without* which Chriſtianity were uſeleſs, and with *which*, its uſes, from the unalterable, but

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inexplicable conſtitution of things, *may be* impaired. The Goſpel is addreſſed to beings, who may overlook the truths it contains, from inattention; who may miſunderſtand them, under the influence of prepoſſeſſion; who may corrupt its doctrines, through the bias of ſecular intereſts, and violate its commands, in the blind fury of paſſion. But the ſame Goſpel foretels theſe evils—it condemns them, and is calculated to alleviate them. *Prevented*, indeed, they cannot be, 'till the free agency of man be taken away, and *then*, the wheat would be plucked up with the tares, and every hope of the riſing harveſt entirely deſtroyed.

To the right uſe of God's favours, be they of the natural or of the religious kind, ſome voluntary efforts, ſome mental qualifications are requiſite, on the part of thoſe to whom they are offered—the Sun will ſhine, and the rains will deſcend, with little advantage, to the ſluggiſh and the obſtinate huſbandman. Chriſtianity, in the ſame manner, though it be fortified by the moſt pertinent evidences, and inculcate the moſt important duties, though its menaces be awful and its promiſes alluring, may not always be efficacious enough to reclaim the licentious or to convince the prejudiced. Upon theſe occaſions, we ſee plainly that ſome degree of blame is deſerved by man, and we do *not* ſee any juſt cauſe for extending that blame to his God.

Let us, however, for the ſake of hypotheſis, allow the practice of Chriſtian Virtue to be conſiſtent with the abſence of human freedom. Every operation of the underſtanding, and every deliberation of the will muſt then be directed by a ſupernatural, that is, a *miraculous*, power; and as every day, and every hour, call forth the exerciſe *both* of the underſtanding, and of the will, every day and every hour would require a *divine interpoſition*. Who, then, are the perſons, whoſe wiſhes of ideal perfection can only be realized by a *perpetual* ſeries of miracles? They are to be found in that claſs of men who object to the Goſpel, that it was uſhered into the world by the miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

If the imperfect efficacy of the Goſpel be not inſiſted upon as a reaſon for rejecting it, our adverſaries ought to declare explicitly that they mean, *not* to ſubvert Chriſtianity, but to reform Chriſtians. If it *be* inſiſted upon for that fatal purpoſe, I would combat this argument upon the analogical principles, that were before applied to another queſtion. The premiſes admit, that Chriſtianity has been uſeful in *ſome* degree—the concluſion affirms, that it ought to be rejected, becauſe it is not in the *higheſt* degree uſeful. Civilization has not reached its utmoſt perfection, and, therefore, we ought to return

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in haſte to a ſtate of barbariſm. The laws of a Solon or a Lycurgus have not prevented *all* irregularities, and therefore ought to be ſtripped of that authority by which they have prevented *many*. A medicine, through ſome injudicious procedure in the application, ſome obſtinate ſymptom in the diſorder, or ſome perverſe oppoſition in the patient, has not been completely efficacious in *all* caſes. *Therefore* it ought not to be applied in any caſe whatſoever.——He that can leap from ſuch premiſes to ſuch concluſions, has no right to complain of credulity in his opponents. Let it not be ſaid, that theſe inſtances are drawn from the works of *man*, whereas Chriſtianity is repreſented as the more *immediate* work of God. Though it be the work of God, *it relates to man*; it ſuppoſes him to be inveſted with powers, which he may uſe or abuſe; it is deſigned to *improve* his nature gradually, but not to change it eſſentially.

The edge of the objection we are now examining, may be yet more blunted, if we look back upon the poſitive efficacy of the Goſpel. Chriſtianity, then, has ſoftened the horrors of war, not only by preventing its profeſſors from putting their conquered enemies to death, but by inſpiring them with ſentiments of humanity towards the defenceleſs captive. In many, would to God I could ſay, in *all* parts of the Chriſtian world, it has wreſted from the hand of the oppreſſor that power, which, in almoſt every part of the Gentile world, the maſter had uſurped over the life of his ſlave. It Has taught mankind to ſhrink from the wanton effuſion of human blood, which diſgraced the gladiatorial ſhews of a brave, and an enlightened people. It has baniſhed the execrable barbarities of human ſacrifices, and, rightly underſtood, it is now beginning to correct in its profeſſors, what, when *miſunderſtood*, it was ſuppoſed to cheriſh—the ſanguinary rage of perſecution. It has ſweetened the comforts of domeſtic life, curbed the licentiouſneſs of polygamy and divorce, and mitigated the rigors of that unſocial and unnatural ſervitude, to which, among the polite Citizens of Athens, as well as the rude Foreſters of Germany, the fierce and haughty deſpotiſm of the ſtronger ſex had condemned the weaker. It has extirpated the hideous cuſtom of expoſing children, which the moſt celebrated ſtates of antiquity openly permitted, and their ableſt writers have expreſsly recommended. In ſome meaſure, it has checked that falſe patriotiſm, which tramples upon the moſt ſacred rights of mankind, and which juſtifies every artifice however perfidious, every outrage however unprovoked, under the ſpecious pretences of *national* proſperity and *national* glory. It has called up a ſpirit of indignation againſt thoſe brutal indulgences which nature ſhudders even to name, but which were practiſed by the moſt civilized nations, without a pang, and without a bluſh.

Much,

Much, far *too* much, has been ſaid, in the undiſtinguiſhing eagerneſs of panegyric, concerning the urbanity and politeneſs of Greece and Rome. The untempered acrimony of their ſatyriſts, the ſcurrilous violence of their Orators, and the groſs indelicacy of their comic writers, preſent, to an impartial mind, no very amiable picture of their manners. He, indeed, that would accept the advantages of all their boaſted elegance, in exchange for the endearments and the embelliſhments of modern life, may be charged almoſt with the depraved taſte of the Hottentot, who, upon his return to his native land, ſhook off the European dreſs, nauſeated European food, and wallowed in all the filthy and abominable exceſſes of his countrymen.

There are, I know, ſome perſons, who would derive the improvements of theſe later ages, from our civilization and our laws. But by *whom* are theſe laws enacted? By Chriſtians. Among whom is that civilization eſtabliſhed? Among Chriſtians. From what ſource proceed either the equitable and humane ſpirit of thoſe laws, or the elegancies and comforts of that civilization? They proceed from the *ſilent*, but *real*, efficacy of the Goſpel itſelf, which corrects every ſelfiſh affection, purifies every ſenſual appetite, and reſtrains every ferocious paſſion. Unqueſtionably, if the great refinements of the antients be juſtly aſcribed to *reaſon* alone, the greater refinements of the moderns may, with equal juſtice, be aſcribed to *Religion*, as a *powerful* and a conſtant, though it be not the *only* cauſe.

Many errors are yet maintained by believers: they are, however, leſs offenſive to good ſenſe, and leſs injurious to good morals, than the monſtrous tenets of thoſe ancient Religions, by which their Deities were repreſented in the moſt degrading employments, and worſhip was preſcribed to the vileſt of reptiles, and the moſt abandoned of men. Many indefenſible ceremonies are yet retained in a church that ſtiles itſelf Chriſtian. But it were unjuſt to place the fantaſtic mummeries of Popery upon a level with that maſs of Roman ſuperſtition, from which many of them were borrowed—with the puerile extravagances of Ægyptian and Zabian idolatry—with the lewd exceſſes that were practiſed, openly in honour of Venus at Babylon, and ſecretly in the myſteries of Cotytto at [illegible]. *Athens.*

Among the rational, and, I am happy to add, not an inconſiderable, part of believers, the eſſentials of Religion are no longer confounded with points of ſubordinate moment or temporary obligation: lines of diſtinction are drawn between factitious and real difficulties; and mankind are daily learning to reſt their hopes of ſalvation, not upon punctilious attachment

to

to exterior forms, but upon a ſteady adherence to genuine morality. To theſe changes in the opinions and the actions of Chriſtians, let me add, the bleſſed ſpirit of toleration which is widely diffuſing itſelf through all ranks of Citizens, and all ſects of Chriſtians." That ſpirit muſt finally give new dignity and new ſtability to the cauſe of truth, as it foſters the freedom of enquiry, as it tempers the zeal which darkens knowledge, and ſtimulates the induſtry which acquires it, and, above all, as it enlarges the ſphere of Chriſtian charity, that celeſtial virtue, which, in religious concerns, where it claims the pre-eminence, has been too long crampt and depreſſed, and of which, every ſolitary inſtance, in times leſs enlightened, was lamented as a weakneſs, or condemned as a crime.

To this favourable repreſentation of our preſent ſtate, the irreligion and luxury of the age will be oppoſed. In reſpect to the firſt charge, the poiſon of infidelity has, I fear, ſpread too far. But the progreſs of it has, in ſome degree, been ſtopped, and the virulence of it aſſwaged by the labours of thoſe men, who have defended with ability, the evidences of that Revelation, the doctrines of which they have examined with impartiality. Indeed it well deſerves our notice that the fundamental principles of natural Religion have been more accurately inveſtigated, and more conſiſtently explained in thoſe countries, where the ſacred authority of revealed Religion has been longer eſtabliſhed, and oftener attacked.

But our defence is not to be reſted, *only*, even upon this honourable ground; for if the remote cauſes of our infidelity be deeply explored, we ſhall have leſs room to take the alarm, either in regard to the ſafety, or the credit of our Religion. Thoſe cauſes are to be found in the peculiar tendency of our ſtudies, and the unwearied activity with which they are purſued: in the profound reſearches which men are making into the works of Nature, and in the clear and correct habits of thinking which they have transferred from philoſophy, where thoſe habits were firſt acquired, to other ſubjects. Hence the Truths of Revelation have been examined with unprecedented, and in ſome reſpects, perhaps, an unwarrantable ſeverity; and hence they have been exhibited by the contending parties, in ſuch points of view, as were unknown to paſt generations. It has often been obſerved, that the alacrity of infidels is eventually ſerviceable to the Goſpel, by keeping alive the vigilance of Chriſtians. There is equal reaſon to imagine that the ſucceſs of Chriſtians has ſharpened the eagerneſs of infidels, and that the vigorous and ſkilful preparations of our enemies are to be, in part, imputed to their apprehenſions of our *increaſing* ſtrength.

Inveſtigation,

Inveſtigation, whether of the critical or philoſophical kind, when it has been unexpectedly ſucceſsful, always awakens a ſpirit of reſiſtance, among the indolent, who are unwilling to be diſturbed in the repoſe of opinion long ago adopted: among the envious, who are zealous to cruſh the growing popularity of diſcoveries, which themſelves have not made; and among the vain, who, in order to diſplay their own ſagacity, oppoſe *new errors* to *new truths*. The ſame motives operate with *peculiar intenſeneſs*, when any uncommon improvement has been made in religious knowledge. It is, therefore, no mean ſubject of conſolation, and even of triumph, to the Friends of the Goſpel, that the new arts of oppoſition employed againſt it by its adverſaries, were provoked by the new modes of *defence* which its advocates had recently found out, and that the *ſeeming danger* of Revelation is, in reality, both a *ſign* and a *conſequence* of its ſafety.

The reaſons here aſſigned for the prevalence of incredulity in an age, when there is the ſureſt foundation for a rational faith, will, probably, bring back to your recollection the remarks I made, in the opening of this diſcourſe, concerning the ſimilarity which pervades the whole of the Divine Government, as it is adminiſtered in the affairs of this world. In the religious, as well as in the natural and moral parts of that government, every evil is ſecretly or openly accompanied by ſome good, which *indirectly* ſprings from *that ſpecific* evil, and is particularly qualified to mitigate it. In like manner, every acceſſion of good leads to the production of evil, and of evil, too, which in its malignity bears ſome proportion to the degree of that very good, by which that very malignity itſelf is, in ſome meaſure, corrected. Thus by the wonderful and ſimultaneous operations of *oppoſite* cauſes, the *real* harmony of this ſyſtem * is preſerved, and the *real* deſigns of its omniſcient Author are carried into compleat execution.

In

* I here ſpeak concerning the harmony of *our own* ſyſtem; but I preſume not to determine concerning the harmony of the univerſe, though ſuch determinations have been often made by learned Philoſophers, and by pious Divines. Of other ſyſtems we have no knowledge, direct or *even* indirect: for in the application of analogy from what is known, to the unknown, it is neceſſary that ſome common property ſhould belong to them, as a *foundation* for that analogy. But intelligence, capable as it is of infinite modifications, and infinite uſes, is, perhaps, *not ſuch* a property in the preſent queſtion. We can form no probable conjectures concerning the ends for which other beings are deſigned, or the faculties with which they are endowed, or the modes in which they think and act. They may poſſeſs ſenſes which we want, or they may want thoſe which we poſſeſs, or, they may think without the aid of *any* ſenſes, whereas our intellectual operations originate in ſenſation as their ſource; and ſeem to be always dependent upon corporeal organs, though the degree of that dependence cannot be calculated, nor the manner of it explained. We have, therefore, no right to extend to them any concluſions concerning the *evil* of imperfection, becauſe ſuch concluſions are founded upon facts, which concern *ourſelves* only, and which may with *as* much propriety be ſuppoſed *peculiar to one* ſyſtem, as *common to all*. We are guilty of no abſurdity, in ſaying, that the virtue and the happineſs of other beings may differ in *kind*, as well as in *meaſure*, from the virtue and happineſs of man. We perceive no contradiction, in ſuppoſing, that

amidſt

In regard to the ſecond charge of Luxury, I acknowledge that in the practice, as well as in the doctrines of Chriſtianity, while ſome parts are going forward, others are at a ſtand; and thoſe, too, of a kind, which it were for the honour of Religion and the intereſt of ſociety to keep pace with the reſt. I muſt, however, obſerve that the Goſpel has indirectly lightened the miſchiefs which it could not directly obviate; and I would boldly contend that our exceſſes are of a leſs alarming nature, than the gaudy and effeminate voluptuouſneſs of Perſia, or the fouler and more deteſtable debaucheries of Rome. It ſhould not be forgotten that our Virtues, (for even Virtue will grow up in the ſoil where Luxury is moſt apt to thrive,) far exceed thoſe of antiquity in the purity of their motives, and the conſtancy of their operation. The reſtraints that are put upon the natural fierceneſs of our tempers, the decencies obſerved in the daily intercourſe of life, the mitigation of national antipathies and controverſial acrimony, the generous and active ſpirit which animates our charitable inſtitutions, are illuſtrious proofs of the improvements which I aſcribe to my contemporaries.

For their imperfections, indeed, I mean not to ſtand forth as an apologiſt, conſcious as I am, that their conduct falls very ſhort of the ſtandard which Chriſtianity has fixed. But I am not aſhamed to appear as an advocate for their real Virtues. I am happy to trace up thoſe virtues, through

 cuſtom

amidſt the wonderful variety of God's works, there may be a train of cauſes and effects quite unknown to us, by which Virtue exiſts entirely unmixed with vice, and happineſs with miſery. The Scriptures will furniſh us with inſtances, by the aid of which both of theſe ſuppoſitions may be *illuſtrated*, though I be not allowed to ſay, *demonſtrated*. In the life of Chriſt we ſee Virtue without Vice—in the future ſtate of the righteous, we are taught to expect Happineſs without Miſery. But, in our preſent ſtate, which is probationary, and which, in a *particular manner*, as well as to a *particular degree*, is imperfect, the conſtitution of things is different. Virtue, though it be ſometimes choaked by Vice, ſometimes grows up with it. Vice, though it be, in general, corrected or prevented by Virtue, frequently accompanies it, and in ſome caſes, even *ſprings from it*, as its *occaſion*, indeed, rather than its *cauſe*—this diſtinction ſhould ever be kept in view, becauſe it is the property of real Good to extend and perpetuate itſelf, and that tendency is obſtructed by collateral cauſes, ſome of which operate, *chiefly* or *ſolely*, when Good of a particular kind *already* exiſts in particular circumſtances. In what manner the mixture of Good and Evil is effected, and to what extent it operates, we cannot always determine with preciſion. But we know, that, according to the preſent condition of man, the abuſe of Good is always poſſible; and there are caſes in the moral as well as the natural world, where we may ſay with the Schoolmen, that the corruption of the *greateſt* Good leads to the *greateſt* Evil. Yet, Virtue among the numerous, and, ſome of them, inſuperable, impediments, which ſurronnd it, yet retains its name, its nature, and its uſe. It claims ſuch ſuperiority over Vice, as ought to determine us in every part of our moral agency. It controuls Vice in ſo many *viſible* inſtances, and with ſo many *beneficial* conſequences, as form a *poſitive* proof in favour of the Divine Wiſdom and Benevolence. The reader has anticipated me in the application of that proof to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, which, though it directly produce much Good, may indirectly produce ſome Evil; and which, as it is more underſtood and approved, may, for *that reaſon*, provoke more obſtinate oppoſition from the frailty and pride of man.

cuſtom and education, to their *primary ſource* in the Goſpel; and I am ſollicitous to ſhelter the reputation of thoſe who practiſe them, from the bitter and inconſiſtent reproaches of our adverſaries, who firſt condemn us becauſe we are not *faultleſs*, and would then enſnare us into a *disbelief* of the very Religion, which prevents us from being *profligate*.

It is common to overlook the vices of our forefathers, towards which our abhorrence is naturally ſoftened, when they ceaſe to excite our fears. It is equally common for us to admire thoſe virtues, which no longer annoy us by the *nearneſs* and exceſs of their ſplendour, and which, like material objects viewed in a diſtant horizon, are enlarged beyond their proper magnitude. But ſurely, he that does *not* wiſh to make mankind *better*, can have no right to complain that they are *bad*; and he that *does* entertain this benevolent wiſh, will be happy to find that his purpoſes are, in ſome meaſure, anticipated, that the foundations of virtue are already laid, and that, for himſelf is reſerved the eaſier, but not diſhonourable taſk of raiſing the ſuper-ſtructure.

Upon the whole, then, if Chriſtianity, upon a fair and comprehenſive enquiry into its effects, be found to have done *much* towards the improvement of the world, let us chearfully pay it that tribute of reſpect, in conſequence of which it will be enabled to do *more*. If it appear to have done, what in our eſtimation, is *too little*, let us ſearch for the cauſes of every defect, where alone they are to be diſcovered, *not* in the evidences or in the precepts of the Religion itſelf, but, in the infirmities of thoſe, who defend, without underſtanding, or who profeſs, without practiſing it. At all events, let us not by inſulting its authority, and by depreciating its excellence, endeavour to reduce it to a *total incapacity* of doing *any good*; for the bulk of mankind will never obey the law, which they are taught to deſpiſe, and we know from the melancholy experience of men, whoſe attainments and whoſe native vigour of mind ſet them far above vulgar prejudice, that, when the reverence for Religion is once *loſt*, the love of virtue is ſeldom retained.

There is a dark ſide belonging to all the concerns of man. Let us turn from it to the contemplation of thoſe brighter ſcenes, which unfold themſelves to every unprejudiced and well-informed Chriſtian. Though God had for many ages delayed the appearance of his Son, he, in the fulneſs of time, ſent him forth. Though many obſtacles have, in our apprehenſion of things, impeded the courſe of Revelation, it has ſpread itſelf over no inconſiderable part of the world. Though a variety of cauſes have

obſcured

obſcured its luſtre, and counteracted its influence, the effects of it have been ſufficiently extenſive and ſufficiently beneficial, to intereſt our attention, to excite our gratitude, and to warrant our faith. The tide of human affairs, which, before and after the publication of the Goſpel, has been ſecretly controuled by the Providence of God, and invariably directed to the known or unknown purpoſes which he had in view, is, in theſe later ages, apparently turning in favour of Chriſtianity. Mutually aſſiſting, and aſſiſted by, other cauſes, by the cultivation of polite learning, and of the more profound ſciences; by experiments in natural philoſophy, and by reſearches in moral; by the ſteady exerciſe and humane temper of laws; by the liberal and enlarged principles of civil government, the Goſpel is making new progreſs. The expectations of every worthy man may, therefore, be innocently employed upon the proſpect of ſome happy period, when the belief of our holy Religion ſhall be univerſal, and its efficacy ſhall be compleat. His efforts, at leaſt, may be laudably exerted in accelerating that momentous event, by which the cavils of unbelievers will be effectually put to ſilence, and by which the knowledge and the love of God will be deeply fixed in the hearts of all Chriſtians, through all ages, and in all nations.

END OF SERMON I.

END OF SERMON I.

SERMON, II.

Preached at St. PETER's MANCROFT,

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1780.

HEBREWS xiii. 16.

TO DO GOOD AND TO COMMUNICATE FORGET NOT, FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS WELL PLEASED.

THE excellence of religion is never more illuſtrious, than when it inculcates ſuch Virtues, as are approved, not only by the elaborate operations of the underſtanding, but the fineſt ſenſibilities of the heart. In reſpect to ſome of thoſe ſublime, but abſtruſe doctrines, which Chriſtianity propoſes to our faith, they overwhelm the mind with awe, rather than warm it with affection; and their effects even upon the beſt of men, after beginning in tumultuous admiration, terminate in languid aſſent. Of many arduous duties that are preſcribed to us, we endeavour to explain away the ſeeming rigour; and though we be compelled to acknowledge the neceſſity of performing them, our prejudices and our paſſions throw a cloud over their immediate uſe. But when we are commanded to do good and to communicate, the fitneſs of the command is inſtantaneouſly perceived, the beauty of it is univerſally felt, and deficient as may be the *conduct* of ſome amongſt us, in *ſpeculation*, at leaſt, the utmoſt harmony uſually ſubſiſts, between

between the generous man, who is anxious to *recommend* what he practiſes, and the ſelfiſh man, who is aſhamed to *condemn* even what he neglects.

The Epiſtle, from which my text is taken, abounds with alluſions to jewiſh ceremonies. Hence the exerciſe of Charity is called a ſacrifice acceptable to God, with the ſame propriety, as, in a former verſe, we are directed to offer up the ſacrifice of praiſe. No terms can, indeed, more ſtrongly paint either the value of charity in the ſight of God, or the advantages it produces to mankind; for, as the ſacrifices in the temple made attonement for the ſins of the people under the Moſaic diſpenſation, ſo, among thoſe who profeſs to be guided by the light of Chriſtianity, the habit of doing good will be ſufficient to cover a multitude of ſins. Revelation, doubtleſs, when the principles of it are examined without prejudice, and interpreted without enthuſiaſm, will always be found to ſet morality far above ritual obſervances. Thus you have the deciſive evidence of the Prophet, "that to obey is better than the fat of rams;" and from an authority yet *more* reſpectable, we may learn, that "God will have *mercy*, not ſacrifice"—mercy, which involves in it the eſſence of Virtue, not ſacrifice, which is only an arbitrary and exterior ſign—mercy, where the intention of doing good is ripened into action, not ſacrifice, where the act of doing good may never be performed, nor the intention of performing it, ſincerely felt.——

Charity juſtly claims a diſtinguiſhed rank in the catalogue of ſocial excellencies; and it well deſerves our notice, that in languages both ancient and modern, as in writers both ſacred and prophane, the expreſſions, which in their ſimple ſtate and generic ſignification, comprehend the whole ſyſtem of moral rectitude, are, in their compounded ſtate, and ſpecific ſignification, *emphatically* applied to works of beneficence.——εὐεργετεῖν—benefacere—to do good. What the Law of Nature required, and the Light of Nature diſcovered in the heathen world, Revelation has deſcribed with greater exactneſs, and enforced with greater earneſtneſs. Hence, in the Chriſtian ſcheme of Ethics, Charity is delineated, not as an external and ſolitary act, but as a vital and inward principle of action; and the rewards annexed to it, are to be attained, not by any detached and occaſional effort of the will, but by a fixed and habitual diſpoſition of the ſoul. It challenges, moreover, our attention, not only as it engages the approbation of God, but as it enables us, to co-operate, as it were, with him in the government of the univerſe. By the diſcharge of this duty, we become perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. We at once act up to our profeſſion as Chriſtians, and to our nature as men. We make ſome approaches to that

that attribute of goodneſs, which we are moſt fond of contemplating amidſt the glorious perfections of our Maker, in the exiſtence of which, we are moſt nearly intereſted in the ordinary courſe of his providence, and by the diſplay of which, he has more eſpecially diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the extraordinary Revelations of his Will.

Before the venerable and learned audience, * whom I have now the honour to addreſs, It were unneceſſary for me to enter upon a formal defence of thoſe Divine appointments, from which reſult the occaſions of doing good, and the obligations to do it. That natural evil is productive of moral good—that the internal and external inequalities of mankind are neceſſary to the exiſtence of every ſocial relation, and the exerciſe of every ſocial Virtue—that they connect the higheſt, and the loweſt ranks of the community, furniſh correſpondent objects to our better affections, and open a wide field for the exertions of our nobler faculties—that all *ſeeming diſcord* in the phyſical and civil condition of the world, leads to *harmony* imperfectly underſtood, yet really preſerved—are truths, upon which the dictates of philoſophy happily fall in with the doctrines of Religion. Inſtead therefore, of tracing through the labyrinths of uſeleſs and endleſs ſpeculation, the reaſons for which evil is permitted, you will be more becomingly employed in conſidering the means which God has ſupplied, in order to check its devaſtations, and to correct its malignity. Do you behold a fellow-creature in diſtreſs? God has not authorized, nor, perhaps, enabled you, to explore all the cauſes of that diſtreſs. But, in giving you the power of relieving it, he informs you, in the moſt deciſive language, of his intention that relief ſhould be beſtowed. Are the minds of the poor bewildered in error and darkened by ignorance? It is your duty to reſcue them from the dangers, to which ignorance and error are expoſed. By performing theſe kind offices you will ſupport the real dignity of your moral character; you will fulfil the gracious deſigns of your moral governor; you will vindicate the ſeeming ſeverity of his diſpenſations, from the complaints of the unfortunate, and the cavils of the impious. By neglecting thoſe offices, you cauſe all the miſchiefs created or perpetuated by your neglect, to be charged upon the attributes of your Maker; and, in the iſſue, you become reſponſible for the miſeries which your fellow-creatures ſuffer, and you have not alleviated—for the crimes which they perpetrate, and which you, by not preventing them, have *virtually* encouraged.

The

* It is a cuſtom for the Clergy of the City of Norwich to attend the Charity Sermon on Good-Friday.

The forgoing obſervations are applicable to the *general* duty of Charity. But the deſign of this diſcourſe is to juſtify and to enforce ſuch particular inſtances of that duty, as the preſent occaſion more immediately requires.

To ſpeak the harſh language of controverſy is always irkſome to a candid mind. To me it is particularly unpleaſing to aſſume that language, upon a ſubject, where it were devoutly to be wiſhed, that all men were impreſſed with the ſame conviction, and actuated by the ſame ſpirit. But, as objections to the utility of your charitable deſign have been produced by thoſe, who wiſh to obſtruct it, they ſhould be anſwered by thoſe, who wiſh to promote it. The claims of truth may always be oppoſed with propriety to the uſurpations of error; and sa raſhneſs or malevolence may have ſuggeſted the accuſation, let it not be thought an unimportant office of Charity itſelf to engage in the defence.

You are directed in the words of my text to do good and to communicate. In the application of that text to the benevolent purpoſe for which we are now met together, I ſhould be happy to convince your judgment, as well as to intereſt your feelings: for, if charity-ſchools be finally injurious to the real tranquillity of the poor, to the well-founded rights of the rich, and to the general order of ſociety, I ſhould encourage you to do what is *not* good, and you would perform a ſacrifice, with which a wiſe and a righteous God will not be well pleaſed.

In the further proſecution of my ſubject, I ſhall firſt ſet before you a few preliminary remarks on the importance of education, and then endeavour to break the force of ſome objections which have been alledged againſt charity-ſchools, and which have grown up, I fear, to popularity, among perſons of captious tempers and ſhallow underſtandings.

It may be proper for me to premiſe, that an enquiry into the uſefulneſs of charity-ſchools, neceſſarily leads to the *general* queſtion, concerning the utility of reading and writing to the poor. The difference, indeed, which ſubſiſts between thoſe who can ſcarce provide ſuch learning for themſelves, and thoſe who ſolicit your aid for obtaining it, is too inconſiderable to affect our general deciſion. What is injurious to the latter, cannot, without inconſiſtence, be defended in reſpect to the former—what is beneficial to the former, cannot, without cruelty, be refuſed to the latter.

The gradations of beings, who are of different ſpecies, open to us the moſt enlarged and magnificent views of thoſe deſigns, which our Creator is carrying

carrying on for the univerſal good. Surely, then, a contemplative mind is not unpleaſingly exerciſed in marking the limits, by which creatures of the *ſame* ſpecies are ſeparated from each other: in obſerving the various degrees of moral and intellectual improvement, of which they are reſpectively capable: in eſtimating the effects of ſuch improvement on the general happineſs; and in ſelecting the means, by which thoſe effects may be more efficacioully promoted, and more widely diffuſed. uſtly may we congratulate our contemporaries upon that depth of inveſtigation, and that clearneſs of reaſoning, which have been employed upon the ſtructure of the human underſtanding. We may commend the induſtry and admire the ingenuity even of thoſe writers, whoſe opinions we do not entirely adopt; for in conſequence of the zeal, with which they have endeavoured to ſupport the claims of their ſeveral ſyſtems to *excluſive* belief, large and valuable additions have been made to the general ſtock of knowledge. The facts, to which the contending parties appeal, and by which an unprejudiced reader is determined in the *partial* rejection, or the partial admiſſion of what they advance, have been collected in greater abundance, and examined with greater accuracy.

In recommending to your protection the underſtandings and the morals of the poor, I do not think it neceſſary for me to decide in the controverſy, that has long been agitated, concerning the *comparative* force of Nature and education. The merits of that controverſy, ſo far as they relate to our preſent enquiry, I will, however, endeavour to ſtate with conciſeneſs and perſpicuity.

That beings, intended, as we certainly are, for different ſituations in our moral agency, ſhould be endowed with different meaſures of intellectual ability, is, I think, no reproach to the wiſdom of our Maker. From the very unequal proficiency of thoſe, to whom the means of cultivation, in appearance *nearly* equal, have been repeatedly offered, we have reaſon to infer that a real difference ſubſiſts in their original capacities. But this difference is, I believe, *far leſs*, than it has been frequently repreſented by thoſe, who, in magnifying it, have hoped to find, ſome, an *excuſe for their indolence*, and ſome, a *gratification for their pride*. So dim, however, is our inſight into the conſtituent principles of the thinking faculty, ſo unſucceſsful have ever been our reſearches into its * primary operations, that we

 cannot

* Helvetius has made many ſtriking remarks upon the importance of Education, and has ſuggeſted ſome excellent rules for the method of conducting it. But he has fallen into groſs and dangerous errors, when he aſſigns " Phyſical Senſibility, and Memory," as the " productive cauſes

cannot preciſely fix the degree of efficacy, which is to be aſcribed to nature alone. On the other hand, our happineſs and our miſery, our virtues and our vices, many of our propenſities, and all our habits, are viſibly and immediately dependent on that ſeries of external cauſes, which is diſtinguiſhed by the name of education. Hence ariſes the neceſſity of attending to theſe cauſes, which are peculiarly ſubmitted to our *inſpection and management*—of opening ſome ſcope for the exerciſe of talents, which a benevolent Creator has beſtowed upon us—of inſtilling, by the earlieſt and moſt vigorous methods, thoſe notions, which preſerve the collective intereſts of this world, and animate the hopes of individuals in their preparation for a better.

But, whatever theory we may adopt concerning the general conſtitution of the human underſtanding, our practical obligation to provide for the inſtruction of the poor will remain, in all material points, the ſame. If the original force of genius, and (as ſome perſons imagine) the original bent of the mind, predominate in producing all the mental accompliſhments of men, and in fixing their character, we cannot ſuppoſe the *artificial* diſtinctions of ſociety to affect the *impartiality* of Nature; and we know, that the uſe of her nobleſt gifts is connected with exterior and arbitrary circumſtances, with opportunities which we may prevent or furniſh, and with improvements which we may counteract or promote. On the contrary, if education be moſt powerful in itſelf, as it unqueſtionably is moſt ſubject to our controul, let us not refuſe to any of our fellow-creatures thoſe aids, bereft of which, the man is too apt to degenerate into the ſavage, and directed by which, he may be formed into the citizen and the Chriſtian.

We live in enlightened times, which public generoſity, in ſome meaſure, reſcues from the infamy that is due to private licentiouſneſs; and in which, ample relief is provided for the infirmities of age, for the anguiſh of ſickneſs, and for the diſtreſſes of unmerited and unexpected poverty. It pains me, therefore, to reflect that, in *ſuch* times, the inſtruction of the poor ſhould be *ſingled out*, even in theory, as an object unworthy of charitable regard, unfit for charitable interpoſition—that any artificial impediments ſhould be thrown in the way of your judicious and diſintereſted concern for your fellow-creatures; and any unjuſt odium induſtriouſly caſt on this your "labour of love."

But

cauſes of our Ideas." Hartley's hypotheſis of vibrations has always appeared to me ingenious rather than ſatisfactory. But I am not acquainted with any Writer, who inculcates with ſo much clearneſs and ſo much energy, the neceſſity of paying an early, a ſtrict, and conſtant attention to the operations of the human mind. He has inveſtigated the principle of aſſociation more deeply, explained it more accurately, and applied it more uſefully, than his great and venerable Precurſor, Mr. Locke.

But, the diligence which you employ in the cultivation of the human mind, is, we are told, uſually laviſhed upon a ſtubborn and a barren ſoil: it is repaid, at the beſt, by a ſickly and uncertain harveſt; and, in ſome caſes, it produces the bittereſt and moſt baleful fruits.

From what ſource do theſe objections take their riſe? Do they ſpring from real pity to the poor, whom knowledge is ſaid to quicken to a *more poignant* ſenſe of their miſery? Or from real concern for the well-being of the *community*, which, as ſome men affirm, is *always* injured, when the poor *preſume* to feel their wants, to exert the means which they poſſeſs of alleviating them, and aſpire to a moderate ſhare of thoſe conveniences, which a gracious Providence has placed within the reach of humble and honeſt induſtry? No. They rather proceed from the *vanity* of ſome men, who affect to ſtartle at the difficulties which elude common obſervation: from the *hypocriſy* of others, who would diſguiſe their own inſenſibility to the ſufferings of individuals, under a maſk of ſollicitude for the *public welfare:* from the ſelfiſh *pride* of more, who wickedly reſent every liberal plan of improvement for their inferiors, as an invaſion of thoſe privileges which wealth is too apt to arrogate, and who weakly ſuppoſe their own ſplendor in danger of being *eclipſed*, unleſs they can prevent the *partial emerſion* of their fellow-creatures from the loweſt and darkeſt abyſs of poverty.

Wide, indeed, is the gulph which the Deity himſelf has placed between the poor and the rich. But that the paſſage through it ſhould be *for ever* hopeleſs: that all poſſibility of tranſition ſhould be cut off, as well to the vigorous enterprizes of genius, as to the unwearied exertions of perſeverance: that faculties, which God himſelf has given us, ſhould be ſhut up within the narroweſt boundaries—theſe are poſitions, which cannot be ſupported without the moſt extravagant licentiouſneſs of paradox. If, indeed, they *could* be ſupported by impartial reaſoning, they muſt wound every finer ſenſibility of the benevolent man; and therefore, *till* ſuch reaſoning be produced, thoſe poſitions ought not to be advanced in the form, either of conjecture, which is often raſh, or of inſinuation, which is always poiſonous. Let us, however, bring the evidences by which they have been hitherto defended, to the teſt, not of that good nature, which ſometimes ſhrinks even from juſt oppoſition, but of that good ſenſe, which accurately diſtinguiſhes between ſpecious appearance, and ſolid reality.

All ſuperfluous knowledge, it ſeems, is hurtful. If ſuperfluous be oppoſed to neceſſary, we deny the aſſertion; and we contend that there is no ſize of underſtanding, no rank of life, in which ornamental attainments are, *invariably* and *indiſcriminately*, incompatible with utility. As the ob-

jection is very general, I ſhall oppoſe to it a general anſwer. It is difficult to *determine* at what point utility ends, and ſuperfluity begins: it is unſafe to aſſume even of the poor, that *total* ignorance is better for them than partial knowledge; and it is abſurd to ſay that ſottiſh ſtupidity is, in any ſituation, preferable to a moderate ſhare of ſenſe. A *little* learning is, no doubt, dangerous to thoſe, who preſumptuouſly decide upon *arduous* and complicated ſubjects. Does it therefore follow that *yet leſs* learning will intoxicate the minds of the poor, whoſe objects of contemplation are very *few*, and very *ſimple?* Becauſe much ought not to be accompliſhed, are we to conclude that nothing ought to be attempted?

To fix with exactneſs what degree of knowledge is too great or too little for the poor in *all caſes*, is neither an eaſy, nor, indeed, a neceſſary taſk. It is *far too little*, we may ſay with confidence, when they are left in a ſtate of profound ignorance, concerning their civil rights, their ſocial and religious duties, and their beſt intereſts both in this world and the next. It is *too great*, when their minds are ſwollen up with inſolence and vanity—when their curioſity is ſent out upon the wing in queſt of the *very ſublime* or the *very ornamental* parts of learning—when their attention ſteals away from the occupations on which they depend for their livelihood, and is ſquandered upon points of trifling and unprofitable amuſement. But, from evils ſo remotely conſequential, ſo faintly probable, experience leave us little to dread. The knowledge, which is obtained under your patronage, may not be altogether barren of pleaſure, as well as uſe, to the well-diſpoſed—it may check the vitious in the career of their exceſſes. But our opponents, even upon the ſevereſt ſcrutiny, could ſcarce ſtumble upon a ſingle inſtance, where the poor mechanic, in conſequence of his education in a charity-ſchool, has been ſeized with a rage for literary fame, has ſtarted aſide from the proper employments of his ſtation, plunged into the deep and trackleſs paths of metaphyſics, or ſoared into the brighter and more enchanting regions of poetry.

The inſtitutions, which you ſupport, are, it ſeems, adapted with too little preciſion, to every degree of capacity with which theſe children may be endowed, and every walk of life for which they may be deſtined. The imputation is futile and falſe. There is no walk of life ſo humble, in which the plain inſtructions you furniſh may not be uſeful, and no capacity ſo dull, as not to comprehend them. If the objection, however, be yet ſuppoſed to retain ſome force, we ſhould recollect that ſome imperfect on cleaves to every ſcheme of man, and that the imperfection here ſpecified belongs, in

in a yet *higher* degree, to other charitable plans of a more *public* kind. Many parts of thoſe plans are ſo untractable in their own nature, ſo interwoven with collateral matters of great importance, ſo rivetted by the authority of original and expreſs appointment, that they will bend to no honeſt expedients of alteration, even when they have ceaſed to anſwer their firſt ends, and when they clog the operations of other wiſe and ſalutary rules. But your ſcheme for inſtructing children in theſe ſchools is flexible to temporary exigencies. It is ſubject to the immediate inſpection of thoſe, who are moſt ſollicitous for its ſucceſs. It is controuled by the power, and directed by the prudence, that *firſt* eſtabliſhed it: every abuſe in the management of it is eaſily diſcovered and eaſily reſtrained; and every new poſſibility of improvement may be accompanied with ſpeedy and compleat execution.

Too much time, ſome men would perſuade us, is waſted in theſe ſchools. Can it, then, be ſaid with truth, either that the loom has ſtood ſtill, or the plough been deſerted, becauſe the childhood of theſe little ones is employed in gaining ſome little acquaintance with their native language? And may not inſtances be produced, in which, the knowledge they get, has an immediate and beneficial influence on the labours, in which they are afterwards engaged?

But ſchools, it ſeems, are very improper places for acquiring this ſmall pittance of learning, becauſe, where numbers are aſſociated, the lewd enflame the lewd, and the audacious harden the audacious. If this objection be well founded, it equally extends to thoſe ſeminaries, in which our beſt ſyſtems of education are begun and compleated, and from which have proceeded the brighteſt luminaries of our church and ſtate. To this conſequence no honeſt man will oppoſe that *imaginary* "delicacy of † ſentiment," which an ingenious writer has dared to pronounce *peculiar* to noble birth. Virtue is not, like title and fortune, hereditary. The love of virtue ſometimes finds a place in the boſoms of the poor, and it may be encouraged in theſe ſchools, where the poor are from their infancy habituated to the deſire of praiſe, and to the dread of infamy. But, if there *be* ſomething courſe in the texture of their minds, ſomething illiberal in their manners, ſomething violent in their tempers, will theſe evils be eradicated by the mere want of company? May not their exceſs, at leaſt, be corrected in ſcenes, where a decent behaviour meets with applauſe, and an irregular behaviour with puniſhment? Schools, therefore, in which many of theſe children are permitted to meet together, are

† I am ſorry to mention with diſapprobation the name of Blackſtone. See the introduction to his commentaries, p. 12. vol. I. edit 7.

are *not* always hurtful to their *morals* upon *that* account; and, frequently, upon the ſame account, *are* uſeful to their underſtanding. The powers of the human mind do not often expand in ſolitude. Emulation is not entirely a ſtranger to the breaſts of theſe little ones. It may be awakened even amidſt the humbler ſtudies which they are directed to purſue: it is to be kept alive only by repeated compariſon, and the effects of it are both ſalutary and permanent.

But what conſequences are likely to follow, if theſe children be not allowed to aſſemble within the reach of inſtruction, and under the eye of authority? They may infeſt your ſtreets in crowds of loiterers and vagabonds: Under the roof and in the preſence of wicked parents, they may daily and hourly drink in corruption from its worſt ſource: they may form little ſocieties amongſt themſelves, for purpoſes of petty miſchief: Could they, by violent means, be driven into ſolitude, their minds might grow ſluggiſh and unqualified for any future employment; or impelled by the inſtinctive and irreſiſtible activity of their tempers, they might plunge, at once, into criminal purſuits, becauſe no path was opened before them, to ſuch as are harmleſs or beneficial.

It has been urged, that, through the unbounded liberty of the preſs, books of a malignant tendency are promiſcuouſly circulated, and that ſuch books are particularly dangerous to thoſe perſons, whoſe views are confined, and whoſe principles are unſettled. This objection is, no doubt, plauſible; and whether it be founded upon a ſerious regard for the beſt intereſts of mankind, or be inſidiouſly employed as a veil for the moſt pernicious purpoſes, in either caſe I ſhall beſtow upon it a very minute examination.

Be it obſerved, then, that good books are multiplied among us, at leaſt, in equal proportion with the bad: that the antidote, therefore, is no leſs acceſſible than the poiſon; and that publications deſtructive to morals, written, as they are, to gratify the vanity of the idle, or to ſupply the extravagance of the profligate, are, in general, too expenſive for the bulk of mankind. The intereſts of virtue, I confeſs it with ſorrow, have, in theſe later ages, been endangered by metaphyſical ſubtleties, which ſap the foundations of our faith, and by treacherous miſrepreſentations of human life, which taint our manners. But books of this kind are, chiefly, to be found in the hands of thoſe, who have much leiſure to *miſ-employ* upon them. Seldom do they deſcend to the lower ranks of men, who are perfectly incurious about the intricate ſpeculations, in which infidelity would involve the underſtanding, and who are little affected by thoſe meretricious ornaments in which vice is tricked out, and by the

the aid of which it ſteals more ſucceſsfully into the deepeſt receſſes of the heart. The excurſions of vulgar curioſity do not often take a wider range, than what is afforded by the trifling incidents of the neighbourhood, and the tranſient topics of the day. From theſe the poor frequently derive innocent amuſement in thoſe hours of relaxation, which they might *otherwiſe* be induced to miſ-ſpend in riotous diſſipation, or in ſolitary intemperance.

It muſt, however, be owned, that ſubjects which affect the public happineſs, *will*, in ſome meaſure, excite the curioſity of the poor, who form a *part* of the public; and if this be the caſe, I would appeal, not to arbitrary aſſumption of what *will* be, but to experience of what *has* been, the conſequence. I would aſk, whether candid conſtructions upon the errors, and juſt opinions concerning the merits, of their Governors, be not, ſometimes, formed by the loweſt orders of the governed? I would aſk, whether, to be illiterate and to be incurious, be convertible terms? Whether ſedition be not conveyed into the mind, as eaſily and as fatally, by the *ear* as by the eye? Whether perſons, who are groſsly ignorant of the principles by which all political queſtions ſhould be determined, be totally indifferent about them? Whether the *calmneſs* of their paſſions be always proportionate to the *ſlowneſs* of their apprehenſion? Whether, in ſhort, men whoſe minds are *quite* uninſtructed, and quite undiſciplined, do not ſtand in moſt imminent danger of becoming the *blindeſt* and moſt *headſtrong* followers to the moſt ignorant or the moſt perfidious guides? Were the right of judging upon the complex topics of government confined to thoſe, who are *really* able to take in a comprehenſive and an exact view of events, in their cauſes and their effects, whoſe tempers are ruffled by no paſſion, and whoſe underſtandings are warped by no prejudice, the objection might *recoil* upon many among the *rich*, who are moſt clamorous in alledging it againſt the poor. Whether you rank it among the bleſſings or inconveniencies of a free ſtate, upon matters which affect, in their conſequences, the happineſs of all, the attention of all *will* be intereſted. Be the abilities of men naturally ſtrong or weak, be the cultivation of thoſe abilities great or little, they are urpuſhed on by a kind of mechanical impulſe, to form ſome judgment, even upon queſtions, which they do not underſtand in their fulleſt extent. Unleſs, therefore, a deciſion, built upon *ſcanty* information, be, in the nature of things, inferior to that which is built upon *none*, the aſſiſtance of education is not employed in vain, where it enables the poor to acquire ſome few materials for knowledge, and to arrange them with ſome little degree of exactneſs.

Depth of enquiry and niceneſs of diſtinction are not to be expected from the lower orders of men. They are, we know, ſometimes enſnared into miſtake, and ſometimes worked up to outrage, by crafty fanatics, or by profligate incendiaries.

incendiaries. But they are not altogether without reſources againſt political and religious impoſture. There is a native ſimplicity and clearneſs of underſtanding, which conducts them to the truth by a ſhorter and ſafer path, than ſuperior minds, when debauched by the affectation of refinement, are accuſtomed to purſue. There is a pride, which prevents them from tamely aſſenting to opinions, which they cannot methodically confute. There is a jealouſy, which often guards them from the artifices of thoſe, who, by plauſible harangues, would beguile them into error. There is a quick ſenſe of honour and of duty, which, interrupted as it may be, by *temporary* cauſes, attaches them, in their *general* habits of thinking, to the government by which they are protected, and to the religion in which they have been educated. While the laws of the twelve tables, and the names of the twelve greater Deities were familiarly repeated by the boys of Rome, the ancient ſeverity of their manners was unrelaxed, and the ſanctity both of their religious and civil inſtitutions continued inviolate. Every citizen was inſtructed, not only as to the privileges he was to enjoy, but as to the duties he was to perform; and he grew up with a firm perſuaſion, that when the one were neglected, the other were forfeited. Let us not, then, be too haſty in adopring the ſentiments of thoſe, who, without ballancing the good with the evil, contend for the neceſſity of barring up every avenue to knowledge, againſt the lower and buſier orders of the community. For if the wiſhes of ſuch men were realized, the greater part of our ſpecies would be degraded to the moſt abject and ſervile condition, where inquietude might prey upon the vitals of morality, or deſpondence cruſh every mental power, by which the man is diſtinguiſhed from the brute. The Scythians *, we are told, put out the eyes of their ſlaves, leſt the attention of the unhappy wretches ſhould be called off from their taſk. Equally inhuman are the principles of thoſe, who would condemn, to hopeleſs and helpleſs ignorance, the underſtandings of the poor, in order to check, what has been *invidiouſly* called, their inſolence, to ſecure, what is *improperly* called, their fidelity, and to confine all their views and all their efforts within thoſe limits, which the caprice, the ſelfiſhneſs, or the timid cruelty of their ſuperiors, may have preſcribed.

But in what country, I would ask, are ſentiments ſo degrading to us as men, and ſo dangerous to us as citizens, openly avowed? In *our* own; where to the general diffuſion of knowledge, and to the general ſpirit of activity awakened by that knowledge, we are indebted for the gradual improvement and final eſtabliſhment of our conſtitution, for the equity of our laws,

* Vide Herod. P. 281. Weſſching's Edit. and Plutarch, Vol. 2. P. 440.

and

and for the purity of our religion. But with what juſtice can we condemn the tyrant, who hung up on high his ſanguinary edicts, written in illegible characters, if the purport and the language of our own laws be ſtudiouſly kept back from thoſe perſons, who from their galling wants and their boiſterous paſſions, are moſt likely to violate them? To what purpoſe do we inſiſt upon the liberal principles, and the extenſive privileges of Proteſtantiſm, when, with the meaneſt and moſt barbarous mockery, we throw open the Bible to eyes, which cannot read it?

It is, I believe, an eſtabliſhed maxim with the beſt writers upon legiſlation, that the education of all youth ſhould be accommodated to the religion and the government, under which they are to live. The conſequences of this maxim, ſo far as they reach ourſelves, are too intereſting to be overlooked, and too unequivocal to be explained away. Papal ignorance is yoked, doubtleſs, by no unnatural union with Papal ſuperſtition, the triumphs of which are moſt inauſpicious, when the blind credulity of the many has reduced them to a ſtate of ſervitude to the ambitious deſigns of the few. But the church of England has, I hope, too much confidence in her own ſtrength, to muffle up any of her pretenſions, or any of her doctrines, in ſtudied obſcurity; nor will ſhe refuſe, to the meaneſt of her members, that freedom of enquiry, to which we are proud to aſcribe her exiſtence and her proſperity. We have paſſed what a great writer (Beccaria) has juſtly ſtiled "the difficult and terrible tranſition from error to truth." After this awful criſis, the utility of knowledge becomes, by a conſtant and growing preparation of cauſes, proportionate to its extent. And, as it is the boaſt of the preſent age, that the ſpeculative part of mankind are making a moſt uncommon progreſs in every kind of learning, which is worthy of rational beings, let it not be the *reproach* of the ſame age, that the laborious and more numerous ranks of men, whom God has *equally* endowed with intellectual powers, ſhould be doomed to be quite *ſtationary* in the uſe of them.

It is the lot of the poor to receive, in ſome meaſure, their ſupport from the kindneſs of the rich. But muſt their own induſtrious efforts be diſcouraged, in order to make them *wholly dependent* upon that kindneſs? It is equally the lot of the poor to receive the greater part of their learning, from the inſtructions of thoſe who are *more* learned. But muſt they, on this account, be permitted to receive only *ſuch* a ſhare of information, as the mean "avarice of ſenſe," leagued as it is, ſometimes with jealouſy, and ſometimes with cruelty, ſhall be pleaſed to aſſign them? Muſt no check be put on the pride of thoſe, who have attained ſuperior wiſdom? Or does the experience of paſt ages encourage us to repoſe an implicit

and *unlimited* confidence in the diſintereſtedneſs, the generoſity, and the integrity of thoſe, by whom that wiſdom is to be communicated in ſpeculative, or to be employed in active life? For my part, I have too much reſpect for the *collective* happineſs of the human ſpecies, to wiſh for a monopoly of knowledge in any one profeſſion, or any one rank of men. So anxious is my concern for the poor, that I would not, without the moſt urgent neceſſity, expoſe them even to the *poſſibility* of ſuffering in their faith, in their morals, or in their rights, from the artifices of men, who, if they did not mean to *abuſe* knowledge, would hardly wiſh to *engroſs* it. Such, too, is my veneration for the faculty of reaſon, which our Creator has made the diſtinguiſhing mark of man, that I never wiſh to ſee it fettered down in a ſtate of inactivity, where the miſapplication of it is not almoſt unavoidable, and where the effects of that miſapplication are not big with danger. Juſtly do we abhor the blind and ſavage fury of Mahometan conqueſt, when, by the indiſcriminate deſtruction of all the materials from which learning could be extracted, it paved the way for the ſpeedier introduction of ſuperſtition, and the firmer eſtabliſhment of deſpotiſm. We cannot, therefore, look with indifference upon the falſe refinements of *Chriſtian policy*, when, permitting thoſe materials to remain, and encouraging the uſe of them, by the moſt honourable diſtinctions, among *ſome* orders of the community, it condemns the poor to an utter incapacity of reading *any one book* in *any one language*.

We have heard of thoſe times, when the little learning that was among our forefathers, ſhackled the underſtanding, inſtead of enlarging it; when the minds of men were ſuſpended in a kind of dubious twilight, between the gloom of barbariſm and the dawnings of civilization; when the fierce baron was equally illiterate with his unpoliſhed vaſſal; and when the haughtieſt prelate was content to ratify the fulminations of eccleſiaſtical vengeance, by the clumſy ſignature of the Croſs. But ſuch times never can return, while the vigilance of the lower ranks to detect wrong, becomes a reſtraint upon the higher from *committing* it; while the proficiency, they make in the cultivation of their reaſon, animates their ſuperiors in *ſtation*, to preſerve their ſuperiority in *intellectual attainments*, by greater exertions, and higher aims; and thus, by an uninterrupted and lengthening ſeries of cauſes, a ſpirit of application is invigorated and diffuſed, and every kind of learning advances with increaſing rapidity.

There is a latent connection or (if I may be allowed in the uſe of the expreſſion) a kind of *delicate ſympathy*, which pervades the various parts of knowledge, and in conſequence of which, every favourable, and every unfavourable

favourable event, affects the whole. If, therefore, ſeduced by the ſuggeſtions of a narrow and ungenerous caution, we ſhould throw any artificial reſtraints upon the poor, in the cultivation of their underſtandings, the *final*, tho' *unſuſpected* diſadvantages of ſuch reſtraint may far exceed the *immediate* and momentary conveniencies. The general *eſtabliſhment* of ignorance among thoſe, whom we are too apt to conſider as mere hewers of wood, and drawers of water, may itſelf defeat the purpoſes for which it was promoted. Cut off from *every* hope of meliorating their condition, and from *every opportunity* of improving their minds, the poor may begin to relapſe by very ſwift ſtrides into a *ſtate* of barbariſm. They may become *more* unmanageable in their tempers, more groſs in their conceptions, and more licentious in their manners, than they now are. The evil may extend yet farther: for, by ſome ſudden convulſion in the ſtate, or even by the ſlow and ſilent courſe of human affairs, the chains that were forged with ſucceſs for the lower ranks of ſociety, may be transferred to thoſe, who now hold with ſecurity a middle ſtation. Upon the whole, therefore, leſs is to be feared from the *continuance*, than from the *annihilation* of that power, which the meaneſt members of the community now have, even of abuſing the little knowledge that lies within their reach. Though aſſiſted and encouraged to think for themſelves, they may, ſometimes, deviate into error. But if they be permitted to view only the ſame objects, revolving through the ſame tedious ſucceſſion of manual labour; if they be compelled to linger away their intervals of leiſure in the liſtleſsneſs of inaction, or the inſipidity of indifference; if *every* deſire of mental improvement be diſcouraged, and every attempt to attain it be defeated, their minds will ſtagnate into an utter *inſenſibility* to all uſeful truth.

Much ſtreſs has, I know, been laid upon the perverſion, to which even the inconſiderable portion of learning acquired in theſe ſchools, is unqueſtionably expoſed. But is it not notorious, that, in the higher walks of literature, ſome men have wanted activity, and ſome integrity, to apply their knowledge in the inveſtigation of truth, and in the ſupport of virtue? The ſtudy of philoſophy, which has produced a Newton and a Boyle, has alſo given riſe to the ſyſtems of many petulant Scioliſts and impious Sceptics; and ought that ſtudy, though it be of *general* uſe, to be indiſcriminately diſcouraged, becauſe, in *particular* caſes, it has been abuſed by weak or by wicked men? Why, then, ſhould theſe *lower* branches of inſtruction, adapted as they are to the ſituation and the views of the perſons employed in them, be entirely neglected, becauſe they have made ſome men vain, and others idle? The perverſion ſo loudly complained of is not ſo frequent or ſo fatal, as to juſtify the *wantonneſs of experiment*, when it would

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extinguiſh the few glimmerings of knowledge, that occaſionally break in upon the underſtandings of the poor, and enliven their ſpirits amidſt the dreary ſcenes, with which they are daily ſurrounded. To every *real* inſtance of miſapplication, we may oppoſe the numerous examples, where the aſſiſtance here furniſhed has formed peaceable citizens, laborious mechanics, and pious chriſtians; where it has ſupplied harmleſs amuſement for their vacant hours, and given new efficacy to the efforts of their induſtry.

But the phantoms of danger, which diſturb the imaginations of thoſe, who wiſh to obſtruct our charitable deſigns, will be, in a moment, put to flight, when contraſted with the clear and invincible evidences which may be drawn from the oppoſite conditions of two neighbouring countries. In Ireland, where the poor are, for the moſt part, totally unacquainted with the arts of writing and reading, we are preſented with a diſmal picture of idleneſs and intemperance; of the darkeſt ignorance, and the baſeſt ſuperſtition; of *independence without freedom*, or *dependence without protection*.—But, in the ſouthern parts of Scotland, the general cultivation of knowledge has been attended with the happieſt conſequences: it has humanized the manners of the lower orders of men, without relaxing their activity; it is gradually wearing down the auſterities of Puritaniſm, and has facilitated the introduction of thoſe arts, by which ſocial life is preſerved and adorned.

Many, it is true, who were educated in theſe ſchools, have abandoned themſelves to immoral courſes. But the cauſes of that immorality are to be found in the inflexible obſtinacy of their diſpoſitions, in the wily perſuaſions of their companions, and too often, I fear, in the dazzling examples of their ſuperiors, who, perhaps, conſider vice as a privilege attached to wealth. They are to be ſought for in every quarter, rather than in theſe ſeminaries, where ſloth and debauchery are checked by many reſtraints, from which, in other ſituations, they are quite exempt.

The controverſy reſpecting Charity-Schools has, I think, been carried on with too little preciſion, or too little impartiality. While the failings of thoſe, who miſapply the bleſſings of education, have been induſtriouſly dragged to view, the faults of thoſe who are entirely uneducated, have been over-looked or ſuppreſſed. But, of theſe unfortunate wretches, it may be truly affirmed, that they are not *leſs* ſuſceptible of evil impreſſions, than children who are admitted into ſchools; that they are not *equally* familiarized to wholeſome inſtruction; that the growth of every amiable quality among them is ſlow, and its continuance precarious. In

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their ſeveral callings, they are ſeldom diſtinguiſhed by ingenuity in contrivance, or dexterity in execution. Their exertions bear the appearance, not ſo much of voluntary labour, as of drudgery unavoidably performed. Their obedience is the homage of ſlaves, and their Religion, I fear, in too many caſes, "the ſacrifice of fools." The moments, in which they retreat, or rather eſcape, from their dull unvaried toil, are conſumed in chearleſs inaction, or outrageous licentiouſneſs. When they are well-diſpoſed, their virtues are cold and unſteady; and if their inclinations be bent ſtrongly towards vice, they are to be curbed only by the extreme rigours of puniſhment. They may be terrified, but can ſeldom be perſuaded—they may be cut off from ſociety; but are not eaſily qualified for the duties of it.

On the other hand, the inſtruction communicated in charity-ſchools, though it be ſufficient to prepare men for the humbler ſtations of life, has no direct tendency to aſſiſt them in the artifices of villainy; nor does it uſually make them pant for ſuch flattering diſtinctions, as belong to their ſuperiors. That knowledge, therefore, when applied according to your wiſhes, is ſalutary—when neglected, it does no harm—when miſapplied, it does not enable men to atchieve *more* atrocious acts of wickedneſs, than cunning and audacity are capable of producing in thoſe minds, upon which no one ray of uſeful learning has ever ſhone from the cradle to the grave.

The poor, if the repreſentations of the rich may be credited, are ſeldom grateful. But the want of gratitude is not, I hope, *remarkable* in thoſe, who are brought up in charity-ſchools; and there are circumſtances, ſurely, which may induce a candid man to ſuppoſe, that theſe children may juſtly claim an honourable exemption from ſo ſevere a charge. At preſent, they are quite unpractiſed in the corruptions of the world—they are awakened, by frequent and ſolemn calls, to the recollection of the favours which they receive—their youth gives play to all the ingenuous feelings of the human mind; and their *very* dependent condition leaves little room for that Pride, which is impatient of obligation.

Were the unthankfulneſs of the poor pleaded as a ſufficient warrant for the *total omiſſion* of Charity, the plea itſelf would be unſound, and the conſequences of admitting it in *all* caſes, would be moſt injurious to the community. When it is urged, in the caſe of theſe little ones, we are provided with arguments for the cleareſt and fulleſt confutation. To withhold the kindneſs, which we may confer with little difficulty, and of which others cannot be deprived without great inconvenience, is cruel. But it

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is cruelty, aggravated by the moſt flagrant injuſtice, to make the puniſhment *peculiar* to theſe ſuppliants, when they ſhare the offence in *common* with other objects of Charity.

There is always reaſon to ſuſpect that the popular invectives which have been let looſe againſt the ingratitude of the poor, are either deſtitute of proof, or mixed with much exaggeration. We may obſerve, too, that the very perſons, who *ſuffer* leaſt from this fault, are the moſt forward to *expatiate* upon it. Their judgments are duped by their avarice. They are content to admit the truth of the fact upon the repreſentations of others, without *expoſing themſelves* to the conviction, which their own experience might bring with it. The generous man will, indeed, deſerve much, where he runs the hazard of receiving little——But the ſelfiſh man *claims too much*, and therefore determines to *deſerve nothing*.

For poſitive and deliberate acts of inſolence or of injuſtice towards a benefactor, no excuſe can be offered. But the offences ſo often blackened with the name of ingratitude, will, upon a ſtrict examination, appear to be of a more venial nature; to be ſometimes involuntary, and ſometimes merely negative. The poor do not, perhaps, ſubmit to every capricious humour, comply with every extravagant requiſition, or crouch to every oppreſſive command of thoſe, who blend the character of a patron with that of an *imperious Taſk-maſter*. They cannot always accommodate the degrees of their gratitude to the various ranks, and the various tempers, of the very perſons, whom they know to be their friends. Their manners make them unſkilful in thoſe *nicer* forms of compliment, upon which cuſtom has ſtamped an imaginary value, and which have acquired among their ſuperiors a currency, that *rough ſincerity* cannot always obtain. Their ſituation prevents them from rendering any *ſignal* ſervices towards the *numerous* protectors, by whoſe *united* aſſiſtance they are enabled to ſupply their own daily, and preſſing wants.

In theſe ſchools the poor are encouraged to imbibe thoſe principles, and to exerciſe thoſe feelings, which have an immediate tendency to cheriſh in them the virtue of gratitude. If they attend to the inſtructions that are here offered to them: if they behave with reſpect to their ſuperiors, and with decency to all ranks of men: if they profeſs a ſincere and general ſenſe of their obligations to thoſe, by whoſe ſupport they are educated; if they acquire and preſerve, habits of temperance, aſſiduity, and honeſty, they make *thoſe* returns, which are moſt important to ſociety, and moſt ſatisfactory to every humane and judicious benefactor.

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The bitterneſs of accuſation has been ſometimes exchanged for the inſolence of contempt. There are perſons, who would perſuade us, that our attention, however vigilant, and our liberality, however diſintereſted, are thrown away upon charity-ſchools, becauſe the perſons educated in them are incapable of great exertions, and becauſe the good, which reſults to the community from the ſcanty and confined information obtained in them, is very inconſiderable. To this groundleſs, as well as inconcluſive reaſoning, I would anſwer, that the education of youth has, in all ages, engaged the notice of the wiſeſt legiſlators, and the ſincereſt patriots: that Chriſtians are furniſhed with more uſeful means for the inſtruction of their children than the heathens were; and that private liberality is among ourſelves employed for that excellent purpoſe, for which reſources of a public nature were provided by a celebrated people of antiquity.* Our efforts indeed reach only to the poor. But the poor conſtitute the majority in every community. Their *numbers*, of courſe, beſtow importance upon any ſcheme that is calculated to preſerve them from vice, and habituate them to labour; and their extreme inability to provide for their own ſafety, ſhould become an additional inducement for us to aſſiſt them.

Seminaries of this kind cannot boaſt of the profound philoſopher, of the elegant ſcholar, or of the accompliſhed ſtateſman. But they qualify young men for entering upon the employments of the huſbandman and the mechanic, one of whom may always deſerve well of mankind by patient induſtry, and the other is often entitled to the praiſe of ingenuity. Such, indeed, was the haughty ſpirit of an admired democracy, that many lucrative profeſſions were conſidered by the members of it, as diſhonourable. The βαναυσοι or "laborious artificers" were ranked in the ſame deſpicable herd with the ἀμουσοι and ἀχαριστοι, "the unlearned and the unpoliſhed," and we read of an Athenian Law, by which it was propoſed that † artizans ſhould become *ſlaves* to the Republic. But the ſuperior humanity and the ſuperior wiſdom of modern ages diſclaim ſuch odious diſtinctions. In the wide and complicated affairs of the world, agriculture and trade deſerve the protection of the laws and the reſpect of individuals. I ſpeak, too, a momentous, though it be a mortifying, truth, when I ſay, that they are of more direct and extenſive uſe, that they are leſs expoſed to perverſion, and leſs hoſtile to virtue, than ſome arts, I might add, ſome ſciences, which, the vanity

* For the proofs that charity-ſchools were inſtituted among the Romans, I refer the Reader to Jorton's Diſſertation on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, page 139. Edit. 2.

† Diophantus propoſed this law at Athens, and it ſeems to have been an eſtabliſhed cuſtom among the inhabitants of Dyrrhachium, (or as it was formerly called, Epidamnus,) to treat their artizans as ſlaves.—Vide Anſtet. de Repub. lib. 1. cap. 7. p. 324. vol. ii. edit. 8 Du Val.

vanity of thoſe who cultivate them, has dignified with more brilliant appellations.

The pride of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God; and under the guidance of his Providence, cauſes, in appearance, very trifling, are finally productive of effects very intereſting. Perſons educated in theſe ſchools have ſometimes become, not only irreproachable, but eminently *uſeful*, members of ſociety: they have emerged from ſordid indigence, to the comforts, and even the elegancies, of affluence: they have carried into higher ſtations, and have exerciſed with more ſplendid ſucceſs, thoſe habits of diligence, which owed their birth to theſe humbler forms of inſtruction. Such inſtances, however *rare*, ſhould not be overlooked. But even in the *general* courſe of things, the fruits of your benevolence are not inadequate to the expence and the labour of preparation. That Being, who judges of actions, will determine upon your merit by the uprightneſs of your endeavours. He, who controuls events, may draw from thoſe endeavours ſuch bleſſings, as, *in the aggregate*, will be moſt honourable to yourſelves, and moſt advantageous to your country.

While many coarſe and invidious objections are thrown out againſt the immorality, the ingratitude, and the unimportance of the poor, complaints of a more *refined* ſort have been pointed againſt the meaſures that are taken to cheriſh in them any ſentiments of Religion: for, the belief of Chriſtianity is, we are told, *forced* upon their minds, and, therefore, cannot be attended with laſting and beneficial effects. To this romantic and, I fear, malignant aſſertion, it may be replied, that, in far the *greater* part of our beſt qualifications, compulſion has *preceded* choice: and that the pleaſures of actual attainment have been experienced, before the labour neceſſary to that attainment had been *voluntarily undergone*.

The argument I am now conſidering will affect the more *elegant*, as well as the more ſimple plans of education. But what, I would aſk, are the grounds, on which it *ought* to affect either? If information upon the ſubjects of hiſtory and manners be proper for young men, what inherent peculiarity is there in Religion, which renders it unworthy of their attention? If Chriſtianity contain *doctrines* which reaſon may admit, and inculcate precepts of which the moral ſenſe approves, why ſhould the ſeverities of proſcription be levelled againſt Chriſtian doctrines and Chriſtian precepts *alone?*

On the other hand, ſhould it be thought expedient to unite religious inſtruction with the various branches of uſeful and ornamental learning, in which

which the higher ranks of men are educated, the poor who ſeldom find acceſs to the latter in any great degree, ought not ſurely to be quite *excluded* from the former.

But all opinions derived from the Goſpel muſt, it ſeems, be branded with the name of prejudice. Yet, while thoſe opinions are conſonant to *truth*, and the actions produced by them are *virtuous*, it is of little moment, from what *ſource*, ſtreams, confeſſedly *pure*, may *originally* have iſſued. The Goſpel, preached as it was by its Author to the poor, is, I am confident, more calculated to enlighten their underſtandings and to purify their hearts, than all the viſionary refinements of honour, or all the ſubtle diſtinctions of philoſophy.

What is admitted as a prepoſſeſſion, afterwards becomes a rule of action. But this proceſs is not peculiar to Religion. The firſt rudiments of every ſcience are received upon credit; and we are indebted to authority itſelf for thoſe notions, which, confirmed by freſh conviction, and enlarged by new application, enable us to renounce authority, when we no longer ſtand in need of it, and to adopt or reject the opinions of others, only upon the ſtricteſt principles of reaſon.

In theſe ſchools, then, the young man is educated in the belief of a Religion, which is in all reſpects accommodated to his ſituation. The doctrines of it will preſerve him from the extravagancies of fanaticiſm, and the terrors of ſuperſtition, to which the poor are particularly expoſed. The precepts of it tend to convert that *churliſhneſs of diſpoſition*, ſo frequently imputed to the lower orders of mankind, into an inſtrument of every *ſteruer Virtue*, of perſeverance in labour, of reſolution amidſt danger, and of hardineſs under adverſity. The promiſes of it will ſupport him under the preſſure of many *ſecret* afflictions, which the rich ſeldom diſcover, and ſometimes, cannot relieve. Taught by this Religion to look up from his earthly benefactor, to a more gracious benefactor in Heaven, he is often kept ſteady in the path of Virtue; and by *that* ſteadineſs, the intereſts of the community, and the happineſs of the individual, are effectually ſecured. We muſt not, however, forget, that in the ſame moment, and with the ſame facility, *prejudices*, on the ſide of *irreligion* and of *immorality*, may be infuſed into his mind. If the *wheat* be not ſown, the enemy is generally at hand to ſcatter the *tares*.

I am not acquainted with any objection to the utility of charity-ſchools, which has not, already, been produced in its full ſtrength, and obviated by

impartial, and, I hope, satisfactory, answers. The sentiments, which I have here advanced, are, I am conscious, addressed to an audience, from whose virtuous attachment to the cause which I have defended, they will meet a favourable reception. It is with the sincerest pleasure, that I shelter the wishes of that audience, and my own opinions, under the *authority* of a writer, the depth of whose penetration is to be equalled only by the benevolence of his heart. After stating with clearness, and solving with ingenuity, some of the difficulties belonging to the subject now before us, this excellent moralist thus expresses himself. "I am always afraid of de-"termining on the side of envy or cruelty. The privileges of education "may sometimes be improperly bestowed. But I shall always fear to with-"hold them, lest I should be indulging the suggestions of pride, while I "persuade myself that I am following the maxims of policy; and under "the appearance of salutary restraints, should be indulging the lust of "dominion, and that malevolence which delights in seeing others "depressed."*

To conclude; when objections are made against any measure, the advantages of which are imperfect, it is incumbent, I think, on the objector, to point out some other expedients less exceptionable. That Virtue is necessary to every member of the community, no speculatist will be hardy enough to deny. But if these children do not derive the first principles of duty, and the first habits of diligence, from Education, whence are they to be obtained? Not, surely, from a delicate sense of honour, which can have no place amidst the ruggedness of their tempers, the awkward simplicity of their manners, and the very circumscribed notions they entertain concerning the moral fitness of things—not from the splendor of high example, for they stand very far removed from the more elevated conditions of life, upon which, indeed, they seldom gaze, but with stupid admiration, and of which, they are far more likely to imitate the vices, than to emulate the virtues—not from the dread of that indigence, the prospect of which ought, I am sure, to be a check upon the extravagance of their superiors, but to the degrading circumstances of which familiarity has rendered the poor almost callous. If they be not supplied with the means of attaining knowledge in these schools, "to whom must they flee for succour?" Will you send them to the cold and haughty eye of the stranger? Will you force them back upon their friends, whom age has, perhaps, benumbed, whom sickness tortures, or whose daily labour scarce procures

* See Johnson's Review of Soame Jennyns's enquiry into the Origin of Evil, page 12.

procures for them the wretched pittance of daily bread? Even the benefit of that labour may be loſt to the orphan, who ſtands here before you, an humble and helpleſs ſuppliant. He, *now* looks up to you, as the guides of his youth, and the guardians of his innocence—he has once wept over the aſhes of an affectionate father, whoſe laſt moments were, probably, embittered by the dread of leaving a child expoſed to ignorance and vice, and whoſe *laſt prayers* were directed to Heaven, for ſuch aſſiſtance, as your benevolence may furniſh, this day.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 7, *line* 2, *for*, controverted—they, *read*, controverted. They.
9, —— 10, *for*, might have been expected to work, *read*, might be expected to have worked.
12, *note* the 2d, *line* 5, *for*, the excellence of this aſſociating, *read*, the efficacy of this aſſociating.
17, *line* 8, for, *enlightens*, read, *illuminates*.
20, —— 19, *for*, utility of the Goſpel, *read*, utility of that Goſpel.
21, —— 1, *dele* comma *after* eagerly.
22, —— 27, *for*, accurately conſidered, *read*, accurately examined.
27, *line the laſt*, *for*, with *which*, *read*, *with* which.
29, —— 22, *for*, Has taught, *read*, It has taught.
—— 23, *for*, Gladiatorical, *read*, Gladiatorial.
—— *ditto*, *for*, and of an enlightened, *read*, and an enlightened.
30, —— 32, *for*, Rome, *read*, Athens.
34, —— 22, *for*, defects *read* defect.
37, —— 2, *for*, elaborate, *read*, laborious.
38, —— 27, *for*, ευεργεσιαι, *read*, ευεργεσιῶν.
—— 28, *for*, to do good, *read*, Beneficence.
40, —— 11, *for*, sa, *read*, as.
48, *note*, *for*, Weſſching's, *read*, Weſſeling's

procures for them the wretched pittance of daily bread? Even the benefit of that labour may be lost to the orphan, who stands here before you, an humble and helpless suppliant. He, *now* looks up to you, as the guides of his youth, and the guardians of his innocence—he has once wept over the ashes of an affectionate father, whose last moments were, probably, embittered by the dread of leaving a child exposed to ignorance and vice, and whose *last prayers* were directed to Heaven, for such assistance, as your benevolence may furnish, this day.

FINIS

ERRATA.

Page 7, *line* 2, *for*, controverted—they, *read*, controverted.—They.
9, —— 15, *for*, might have been expected to work, *read*, might be expected to have worked.
12, *note* the 2d, *line* 5, *for*, the excellence of this associating, *read*, the efficacy of this associating.
17, *line* 8, *for*, enlightens, *read*, illuminates.
20, —— 19, *for*, utility of the Gospel, *read*, utility of that Gospel.
21, —— 1, *dele* comma after eagerly.
22, —— 27, *for*, accurately considered, *read*, accurately examined.
27, *line* the last, *for*, with which, *read*, unto which.
29, —— 22, *for*, Has taught, *read*, It has taught.
—— 23, *for*, Gladiatorical, *read*, Gladiatorial.
—— *ditto*, *for*, and of an enlightened, *read*, and an enlightened.
30, —— 32, *for*, Rome, *read*, Athens.
34, —— 22, *for*, defects *read* defect.
37, —— 2, *for*, elaborate, *read*, laborious.
38, —— 27, *for*, *evepyeses*, *read*, *evepyesein*.
—— 28, *for*, to do good, *read*, Beneficence.
40, —— 11, *for*, sa, *read*, as.
43, *note*, *for*, Wessching's, *read*, Wesseling's.

21 [illegible]

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